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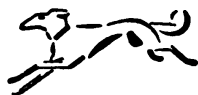
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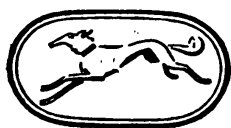
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ALFRED · A · KNOPF

I SAW ENGLAND

I SAW ENGLAND

BEN ROBERTSON



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FIRST EDITION

TO
JEANNE GADSDEN
&
RALPH INGERSOLL

I SAW ENGLAND



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CHAPTER I

It was June and the moon was full and we were flying above white clouds in the middle of the Atlantic. This was the first time I had ever undressed and gone to bed in a plane flying at night over an ocean, and I was uneasy about it—I was not an airman, I belonged to the land, to farms and fields and cities, and I was not certain of the boldness of this gesture. There was a daring about this act that seemed to me to be too daring, it was too much like mocking God and the sky and air and water. Somehow I had a feeling that maybe we ought to seem more humble in this situation. But what good would it do to sit up? What difference would it make whether we had on pants? Time and again I would raise myself up and look out through a small window at the moon and the white clouds; then I would lie down again in the bunk.

I was worried about many things that night. France was falling and England was threatened with invasion—I was worried about everything, from the future of the world to what might happen to me. I was uneasy about myself because I was on my way to England; here I was

flying into the war—an American belonging to President Wilson's era, to bitterness and disillusion and to isolation and peace.

Suddenly the plane began to bump, to drop into vacuums; there would be moments when the plane would seem to have nothing beneath it, not even air. We had run into a squall and there was the sudden sound of rain falling against the window; I strapped myself, stretched out on my back. Well, the world at last had caught up with us.

I dropped off to sleep.

We were in Horta at sunup—we came gliding down into a clean, poor place, and soon we were ashore, walking again on solid ground and feeling surer of ourselves once again, bolder and braver, with night and most of the Atlantic behind us. Whitelaw Reid went off to send a cable, and Mrs. Myron Taylor said to me: "You smoke too much." An old Portuguese woman strolled by and stopped so that we might see her. She had a flat basket on top of her head—a basket that looked like an enormous hat—and about this basket live chickens were arranged like flowers. The sight the old woman created with her chicken basket was sensational, and, being a woman, she knew it—that was why she stopped. She stood on the quay until the plane had refuelled and we had taken off.

We flew from Horta to Lisbon in six hours.

Lisbon in June was one of the gayest, saddest, and most frightened cities in Europe. The old capital of Portugal, austere on its sunny hills, was crowded with refugees who had fled there all the way from Warsaw and Brussels and Paris. Some of them had bribed their way and some had

come in box cars, some of them had nothing and some had escaped in limousines with millions, but Lisbon was the end of the road for all of them—there was the Atlantic. Everybody seemed to be trying to get somewhere—to get anywhere—to America, to Brazil, even to the Belgian Congo—but hardly anyone except frightened royalty and Americans seemed to have any chance. Most of the others had either money and no papers or papers and no money. One morning at our hotel a Frenchwoman who had escaped from France told us she had made up her mind to go back to where she had come from; she was going back to face whatever France had to face, she was not going to let Germans drive her into the sea. I remember a family of rich Polish Jews at our hotel. There was the father, about forty, and the mother and two small pale boys, who had exquisite manners but who looked too elegant and refined. I remember them because of the attention they showed their mother and I shall never forget their mother's face. Whitelaw and I used to ask each other, over and over: "What do you suppose has happened to that woman?" Whatever it was had caused her to lose hope in anything; she had given up. Those refugees in Lisbon made you think of rabbits—you had the feeling that the hunters and hounds were getting closer and that this eventually would be the field they would use for the kill.

Against this background of trouble the Portuguese at this time were having to appear gay. Their government had scheduled an exhibition to celebrate nine centuries of their history and they had gone too far now to cancel it. The government sent Whitelaw and me, as visiting journalists, invitations engraved in gold for the opening ceremony, but the Portuguese censor was taking no chances

with us or with anyone else—the censor would not let us cable our story. From a balcony of our hotel we watched a torchlight procession—a gay parade inaugurating the fair, a ghastly fiesta.

The only really carefree, happy people in that whole city at that time were the crews of a couple of American destroyers and an American cruiser, lying then at anchor in the harbour of Lisbon. When they got bored, they came ashore and spread rumours. One of them told us one night they had had very good luck with some of their yarns—one of them had even been printed in the Portuguese papers, a rumour that the Pope might evacuate to New York. Those sailor boys drank beer and sang songs—they were leaving it all in ten days, they were sailing to the U.S.A.

We pounded pavements in Lisbon and saw ticket agents, consuls, air attachés, and ambassadors; we cabled New York, London, Washington, and then we recabled, and eventually our passage was arranged. One day we told Mrs. Myron Taylor we hoped she wouldn't be bombed on her plane to Rome, and she said she hoped we wouldn't be bombed on our flight to England.

We left Lisbon at daybreak in a land plane to fly to England—a thousand miles over sea. The Germans were already in Bordeaux, so we had to take our chances in whatever we could get, in a flight over the ocean. We gathered at Cintra, the Lisbon airdrome, a long time before daylight, and the flying officers weighed us and went through our baggage and gave us ham rolls and a cup of British tea. Our ship was one of the big Douglas airliners that the Dutch formerly had used on the run between

Amsterdam and Batavia; the Dutch had flown it to England after the fall of Holland and it was being used on this run now with a crew half Dutch and half British. Besides me the passengers included a straw-haired Hollywood actress wrapped in a mink coat, the fleeing Norwegian Minister to Italy and his Norwegian wife, two British Rotarians who had been to a convention in Havana, spreading goodwill, and several aviation mechanics and shipwrecked seamen whom the British government wanted at home in a hurry. The forward seats in the plane had been removed and this area had been fitted with spare gasoline tanks and piled high with mail, emergency rafts, and food and jugs of water. We had a feeling of all or nothing when we took off that morning for England.

We flew low over the Portuguese shore—there were fires among the misty hills, and the land looked old and set in its ways and restful. From Cape Finisterre we flew north over the Bay of Biscay, and we kept flying north—I could tell by the shine of the sun in the windows. There was no heat in the plane and it was cold, so we wrapped ourselves in coats and blankets and tried to sleep, but at the same time kept one eye on the baldheaded young Dutch radio operator, who also was doing the work of a steward. As long as he appeared calm, we kept calm. He seemed to realize we were watching, for he did a lot of smiling and he came back to us as often as he could to talk small talk and to gossip. “Where are we landing in England?” the Hollywood girl kept asking. “I don’t know,” the Dutchman would reply, “and I wouldn’t say if I did know—it’s a secret.” The day was fine for high flying, but after several hours we came down into the clouds and from then on we stuck among them, going up as they went up and sailing low as they approached the

surface of the water. We flew from cloud to cloud—bumpy flying—and the sun by this time was high and slightly to one side—we were flying east. Once when I looked down I saw a ship in the sea, a speck in choppy water, and I remember wondering what ship it was and who were on it; I remember wondering how frightened they must be. Soon there was land below us, and there it was—there was England. It was the warm green summer English country, and what a sight it was to us! Once again we were free.

We flew low along the shore of Cornwall and Devon, and then we flew still lower over the land, turning inland until finally we came down in a green field among camouflaged airplanes and beds of roses—we had arrived at the war.

The men on the ground about us were airmen, all in the blue uniform of the Royal Air Force, and I recall how astonished I was to find them so quiet and undisturbed. Somehow I had expected to find everyone in England in a frenzy—wasn't the country about to be invaded? I was sure that if America were facing attack we should all be out working our fingers to the bone—it wasn't until weeks afterwards that I began to realize that in America we probably should be so busy getting ready that by the time the battle started we would almost be too tired to fight. At this stage, however, I was unprepared for the quiet. Mechanics were hammering on the motors of planes dispersed about the field, men were wandering leisurely in and out of the hangars, and one man in particular I remember—he was hoeing the roses. I said to myself: "What a hell of a job for a war!"

The airmen who came out to meet us were very polite; they told us apologetically that their airdrome had only

recently been designated as a place of entry and accordingly they were new at the game of being customs inspectors. They took us into an officers' messroom and one of the young pilot officers asked us if we would tell the ladies they could use the room to the left as a "cloak-room." We had to wait for some time, as the acting customs officer was out on a practice flight; and since we had to wait, the airmen served us tea. I give you my word of honour—they brought out cups and a big pot of tea. "My God," I said to myself, "what a war! My God, they'll be defeated!"

After a long time we had our baggage inspected and stamped, and as we drove toward a town in a bus of the Royal Air Force, I said to the driver that I was tired—I was so tired and this country seemed so green and restful that I thought I would spend the night in the town and go on the next day to London. The driver said it was all right with him, but he thought he ought to tell me the town had been bombed the night before and the night before that and the hotel had been hit. I replied I wasn't so tired after all—I had better go on to London.

Ever since leaving New York I had known that sooner or later I would have to be bombed if I went to England, but having arrived, I realized immediately that I didn't want to start that sort of thing the first night. I wanted a little time to get ready.

The trip across England that fine June afternoon was a pleasant journey—quite a contrast to the trip I was to make over that same line in the opposite direction, in darkness and an air raid, six months later. This first time the sun was shining and the country was warm and English flowers were blooming in a thousand gardens. There were tremendous accumulations of supplies at stations

along the line and there were many men and women in uniform on the train, but otherwise you would never have known Britain was at war. The train was commodious and luxurious, a fast peace-type of train, and we rolled along through the English hills on a peacetime schedule. The cars were not crowded and the people seemed fully composed—they were reading books and newspapers, just as we would on the Pennsylvania Railroad between New York and Philadelphia.

Didn't they realize what was going on? Didn't they know the Germans were just beyond the English Channel?

We pulled into Paddington Station in London exactly on the minute.

A middle-aged chambermaid with a Scot's accent was pulling enormous heavy curtains over the windows when I came into my room at the Hotel Waldorf in the curve of Aldwych off the Strand. She was a stocky woman with fine grey hair. She said to me: "Do you have a gas-mask, sir?"

"Not yet," I said.

"Well, the housekeeper will bring you one that you can use until you can get one from the government—gas-masks are free."

She left the room and soon there appeared a thin young woman, an English girl with sky-blue eyes. She had a gas-mask which she adjusted over my face. Then she departed and I was left alone on a summer evening in a stuffy breathless room, heavy with war. The black curtains over the windows weighed you down, they oppressed you, and I had never realized before what light

and air meant to a room—what a feel of lightness and living they give a place. Pinned on the draperies was a notice: "Visitors are requested not to interfere with the curtains and blinds once they have been drawn by the staff. It is imperative for the safety of the country that the blackout is strictly enforced, and the police will act if any light whatsoever is visible from the outside." On the bureau was another sign: "In the event of an air raid, all guests will be awakened by the telephone operator; guests will be given five minutes to dress and then will be escorted by the hall porter to the shelter in the basement."

All that was shocking to an American just in from the United States. Quickly I washed and left the room; I hurried down to dinner, which was being served in a basement dining-room—I was to eat in basements from then until I left England, six months later. The head waiter, still in peacetime costume, bowed, and as I studied the menu he said: "It's going to be tough," and "We must all do our part." After eating I went upstairs to the front door and looked out into the darkness—into the blackout of London. It was an appalling sight, like death itself. There was something about the depth of the London darkness that was so dreadful the first time you saw it that you did not dare venture into it. I retired again to the room—to the curtains and the gas-mask and the signs. "The police will act if any light whatsoever is visible from the outside." I asked myself how anyone inside could know for certain that no light whatsoever was visible outside. I started to pull the curtains a little tighter to make sure, and then decided I had better leave them alone. "In the event of an air raid, all guests will be awakened." Suppose they overlooked me? How could I be sure I would be awakened? I had never heard an air-raid siren

in my life. How loud did a siren sound? Maybe a siren wouldn't wake me. All that seems far away now and long ago; I was to hear the warning five hundred times before leaving England, but on this first night I went out to ask the hall porter how loud the siren was. He was an old man, knotty from rheumatism, and he was busy polishing Sam Browne belts. He grinned at me and very politely gave me to understand the siren was as loud as destruction itself; no bloody fear—I'd hear it. He was a comforting man and I was grateful to him—he did not tell me I was afraid.

Back again in the heavy room, I put a flashlight in a chair, I got the gas-mask handy, then I placed my bedroom slippers so I could step into them in darkness; I draped a bathrobe over the chair, put the room key and a comb, my money and passport into the bathrobe pocket. I listened in the darkness for a while to the night sounds of London—to the heavy steps of soldiers in the streets, to the lighter taps of civilians on their way home from the movies, I listened to the roar of darkened busses; and the next thing I knew, it was morning and I was awake again in a world I had never expected. For the next three months I was to sleep like that, never knowing whether any night would not be the last night; from then on until late in the autumn I and everyone else in England expected the Germans any minute.

I was sitting at the desk, typing, when in came Maude Hall, the chambermaid with the Scottish accent. She was very professional for a few minutes and then she could not hold back any longer—she asked me the questions I was to hear a thousand times in England during the months to come: "What does America think? How does America think we are doing?" At that time I was not so

certain what America thought, but I was not going to let her know; I told her America understood, that America was sympathetic. With that she began to pour out her thoughts. Later I was to find scores of Britishers like that; they would bare their hearts to you when they found you came from the United States. So much would depend on America, and they knew it; sometimes it would nearly make you cry to see how desperately they hoped for just one word of encouragement.

"Blarst the swine," she said, pitching a batch of towels on the bureau. "They've machine-gunned unarmed civilians in one of the towns in the southeast—my aunt wrote me a letter—they just came down out of the air and started shooting." Angrily she glared at me; she was full of fury. "It's cowardly of them to do a thing like that—it's yellow." She began dusting the window ledge.

"There goes Mrs. Gibson," Maude said, changing the subject as she glanced out of the window. "She's the woman who scrubs the floors here, she's the charwoman, but she's all dressed up now, got on white gloves, and you'd never know she does such hard rough work." Maude became contemplative. "Mrs. Gibson has a sister here in the sewing-room. They call the sister 'Miss' but Mrs. Gibson is just Gibson." Bitterly Maude smiled. "We're all classified here—the telephonists wouldn't recognize me on the street for fear of compromising their position, and as for the clerks—" Maude laughed. "This morning we practised for an air raid—went to our places in the basement in the shelter. The sewing girls and the barmaids and the telephonists went into one part, the clerks went into another part, and the rest of us went into another. I said: My God Almighty, we may be blasted into the kingdom, but we'll be in our proper places."

Maude went on with her dusting.

"We're terrible about things like that," she said. Again she was quiet for a few moments, then she resumed her monologue. "My brother says we ought to all be brothers, but I always say to him there are the Japanese and the Germans and who wants to be a brother to them? No, I don't go that far, I don't believe in being brothers exactly, but I think everybody ought to have a decent living wage, and all those who don't live decently ought to be made to. That's what I'm for—a decent world—and that's what we must have when this war is over; a better world—that's what we're fighting for. We're fighting for freedom. Things were improving in England—we had better houses, and the children were getting a better education, and their teeth were being kept good. They'll be better yet when this war is finished. That's what I say and I'm no Red—not me."

She dusted a table, emptied the ash-trays.

"The ones at the top and the ones at the bottom aren't as big snobs in England as all those in the middle," continued Maude. "I used to wait on that lady who was lady-in-waiting to Queen Mary—Lady Desborough; she was always very kind and friendly. The morning she got all her robes on to go to the coronation, she sent for us. 'Girls,' she said, 'I thought you might like to see me in my robes.' That was the kind of lady she was—she knew we wouldn't get a chance like that often—to see a lady dressed entirely in ermine. The real people here are right at the very top and all of us working people."

Maude made the bed. Finally, as she was leaving, she said to me: "Blarst Hitler." Then she said: "This is me day off," and with that she departed. And somehow I felt

better about the whole English nation. Maude had not given up like those refugees in Lisbon; she was not defeated.

As soon as I had finished my typing, I went out to do those things all alien newspapermen always have to do in all countries that are at war; I had to register with the police, find the cable office, then meet the censor. With those chores over, I then went for a long walk alone through the heart of central London. I found the city feverishly working, getting ready for the battle. It was apparent almost instantly that London meant to resist. All the fine costumes which we used to see in the peacetime city had vanished—there were no men in white leather breeches sitting on white horses before the Horse Guards building and there were no red coats at Buckingham Palace. Soldiers were stretching barbed wire along the streets, barricading buildings, digging trenches in the parks; and not only were the soldiers busy—the people too were getting ready. On rooftops and in courtyards you saw boys and old men drilling—the Home Guard of England was forming. It was a fine June day with the sun shining and I walked and watched and had a hard time to keep from weeping. I knew what it would mean to me if this city were my city—I should hardly be able to bear it.

Big Ben was striking, powerful and mellow and low, and inside the Abbey the quiet sunshine was sifted. A woman was on her knees in the Poets' Corner, weeping, and other women were praying. I saw a soldier on his knees, a rifle slung over his shoulder. The sight of this man took me home, and in a single flashing thought I was closer to Massachusetts than I had ever been before. I

knew for the first time what it really meant to be a Pilgrim—I understood what it meant to take up a rifle and make your way to church.

The verger in his black gown was showing soldiers from New Zealand and Canada about the Abbey, and I fell in at the rear to listen. The throne chair, he explained, had been taken from the Abbey to a place of safety. "Under these sandbags," he said, "is Queen Elizabeth, and under these sandbags over here is Mary, Queen of Scots." Moving on through the arches and the centuries of England's time, we came to Henry VII's Chapel—to the fluted, soaring chapel which is one of the wonderful things in existence. "There is nothing we can do to protect this," said the verger, motioning with his hands to take in the walls and the ceiling of lace-like stone. "This chapel must take its chances along with the rest of us."

From the Abbey I went on to the National Gallery to see what had become of the great pictures belonging to Britain, and from there on to the British Museum to find out about the Elgin Marbles—the superb frozen and ageless statues from the Acropolis in Athens. All of them had been taken down, had been taken away to a shelter. Next I went to St. Paul's. There was a notice there reminding the people that Englishmen had worshipped on that site for a thousand years; and in the pews were leaflets with a brand-new sort of prayer: "A prayer for protection against air raids."

"Almighty and most merciful God, Who dwellest not in temples made with hands; Be Thou the guardian . . ."

I wandered on, through Fleet Street, along the Strand. Tea at the Corner House was still tuppence a cup, and old women were selling hydrangeas, which then were in season, and pedlars were offering ripe English cherries

for fivepence a bag. They were tearing down the iron railing in the park, and, more astonishing still, Englishmen actually were sunning themselves in the sunshine—they were lying on the grass. Suddenly I then realized what I had been groping toward all that morning—London, the glittering, cold city that we had always known as tourists, had become a friendly and intimate town. London facing destruction and death had turned plain and simple.

That was a stirring tour, full of emotion, and when I got back to the hotel I fought my conclusions. I was supposed to be a hard-boiled tough American newspaperman; I told myself I could not allow myself to be swept away in a day, that there were many more things that had to be studied—I must form a careful, unbiased opinion of what was going on. But just the same I knew from that time on that there were courage and bravery and determination in the British capital. I never for a minute after that morning ever doubted that the British would stand—there would be last-ditch resistance. Resistance was in the air—on the streets, in the papers, everywhere and in everything. All I had to do was to look out of my window at two signs on two buildings. On a grocer's shop there was this from Winston Churchill: "Come then, let us to the task, to the battle and to the toil, each to our place." And on a printing shop in huge letters was John of Gaunt's great sentence: ". . . This blessed plot, this earth, this realm, this England."

That night at dinner the head waiter said to me: "If we must die, we must die—we know why we will be dying."



CHAPTER II

There was an air of finality about the big brick Embassy in Grosvenor Square. Outside, the huge house was sand-bagged like a fort, and inside, it was as crowded as a beehive. In every corridor there were long lines of waiting people, harried and worried-looking, all of them trying to get American permission to leave Europe on the last American ship that was to sail from the British Isles until after the war was over. Like the tired people in Lisbon, these people here were standing in line for the imprint of a stamp—they too, like the refugees in Lisbon, were suddenly being faced with the fact that the world had frozen—it was walled into a thousand prison cells by visas and quotas and passports. Patiently the officials of the Embassy explained over and over that the law was the law—they were sorry, but there was nothing they could do. For hundreds there was no hope. The doors to America were closed.

“Three thousand and twenty-one have been in here since nine o’clock,” the doorman said to me as I entered. He was a tall thin man in a tight blue uniform with long

tails to the coat. "American or non-American?" he inquired. "American," I answered—I had come to register with the government, to report my arrival in London. "Right and turn right," said the doorman, and he clicked one of those things that count people. "Three thousand and twenty-two—American or non-American?" "Non-American," said the man behind me. "Turn left," said the doorman. Three thousand and twenty-two was Pertinax, the French journalist, a refugee from Paris.

Turning right and right again, I came into a room that was jammed with the strangest Americans I had ever seen—with technical Americans and expatriates, with the sons and daughters of American fathers married to foreign mothers, of American mothers married to foreign fathers. Some of them hardly spoke any English, and many of them had never even been in the United States; there were American women who had married Europeans between 1922 and 1931—under the laws those women had lost their citizenship. "But if I had married in 1921 or in 1932 I still would be an American," complained a hatchet-faced woman in a very Oxford voice. "The laws were changed in 1922, madam . . ." explained a clerk behind a counter. "Don't talk to me about laws," continued the woman; "I am an American—I was born in Philadelphia." I had no sympathy for that woman, nor for many of the others in that room. America was a convenience to them—it was something they wished to use.

I explained to an attendant that I was an arriving, not a departing American. I then was directed through this crowd of ragtails and soon was reporting to a girl who had one of the oddest accents I had ever heard—a weird mixture of Southern American and British. Afterwards in London I got to know this girl very well; her name

was Zenobia Forster-Brown and she had a sister Virginia, and their father was a British mining engineer and their mother was a Georgian—the former Louise duPont of Savannah. Mrs. Forster-Brown, the mother, had not been back to Georgia in twenty-five years, not since her marriage; she could not bear to go back, she explained, for she would never be able to leave again once she returned there. She didn't dare go back, she said, so she had brought Savannah with her—she had continued to talk Southern, had brought over a Georgia mammy to raise her children, had taught them to talk Georgian. She called Zenobia "Baby" and Virginia "Honey." That morning at the Embassy, Baby said to me: "What do you think, we have never been home; Ah reckon now we won't be going home until after the wah." One day Baby phoned me to come to the Forster-Brown house in Chester Square to dinner and she said: "Mamma says do you want fried chicken or do you want smothered chicken, and do you want hot biscuits or corn bread." I said I wanted fried chicken and biscuits. Not only was I served fried chicken and biscuits, but in the middle of London in the middle of the war I also was served sweet potatoes—the last ones left at Selfridge's store—and I was served rice, Southern cream gravy, and caramel layer cake. The former Prime Minister of Canada, Mr. Bennett, was also a guest at that dinner, and a London lady called Mrs. Primrose¹ said: "Mr. Prime Minister, did you ever see such an all-American dinner?" Mr. Bennett's answer was: "Not quite so all-American." Mrs. Forster-Brown said to me: "It's very hard in London to find anyone who can boil rice."

¹ Mrs. Primrose, a well-known Londoner, had just been to prison to see Captain George Gordon Canning, one of the Fascists. She said: "I am allowed to take him anything in a basket, but nothing in a bottle."

Our hostess then explained to us why the house was so bare. The furniture had been moved to a safe place in Wales.

"Mamma," said Baby, "tell them about the furniture."

"The furniture," said Mrs. Forster-Brown, "came from my mother's house in Savannah. It originally was at Isle of Hope Plantation, Coffee County, Georgia, and it was evacuated from there when Sherman came through with his army. Now we have evacuated it from London."

"It cost two hundred pounds to move it too," said Major Forster-Brown from the other end of the table, "and I hope this time it gets bombed."

After I had been registered by Zenobia, I went upstairs to see Ambassador Kennedy—an American of still another type. "Hello, Ben," he said to me in the very friendly way of a back-home politician. The Ambassador whirled around in a big desk chair—a red carnation in his coat lapel; a superbly groomed, grinning man, rigged out in a starched shirt, black coat, and striped trousers. Joe was dressed impeccably in the Foreign Office manner. "Did you have any trouble getting on the plane in Lisbon?" I then thanked him for what he had done for me down there—I should never have got to London without his cables. Again he grinned and then began to talk about England and the war. "It's going to be terrible," he said, "and I've stood out in front so long, I'm going to take the shellacking with them—I can't go back until I've taken the shellacking." He talked on for some time; he talked about politics at home, too, about the chances Senator Byrnes of South Carolina had as the Democratic Party's candidate for the Vice-Presidency. As I was leav-

ing, the Ambassador said: "Come by any time, Ben. Any time you have any special slant on a story and I can be of help—let me know; and if you get into any trouble—head for here." That attitude of helpfulness was typical of Joe Kennedy in London. Always he was available to us, he was always ready to do anything he could, and there was much that he could do—he was powerful in his job. He did not write letters as so many government officials do in London; he telephoned and he took matters up with head men; he got action quicker than anybody else in the British capital except Churchill, Bevan, and Beaverbrook. I liked Kennedy's warmth and his enthusiasm. I still like him personally, although he and I, as well as he and many others, have disagreed about the position and chances of Great Britain.

That night I finally got up enough courage to walk out into the blackout, picking my way like a blind man. I was conscious still that I was an alien in a country at war and I did not go far from the hotel, as there was the curfew and I had not as yet received the passes allowing me as a foreign journalist to be out after twelve o'clock. I had to be in by midnight and it made me feel like Cinderella. Walking to the corner, feeling in the dimness with my feet, I watched policemen in white coats directing traffic; I watched the traffic lights—mere slits, green and red and yellow, glowing far back in heavily hooded lamps. Gradually I got bolder; gradually I began to realize how much more northern London was than New York or Chicago, how much more lingering the London twilight was in summer. You began to realize that London was a silhouette that went on for miles and miles. In the darkness against the sky I saw chimneys and cupolas that I had never noticed before—I saw how much

London owed to Sir Christopher Wren, how curving, how rounded and soft it was in outline. New York in a blackout would be a straight silhouette, but London was domed against balloon barrages and the sky. London was very beautiful against the stars in the blackout. It was only in the beginning that the darkness was oppressive.

Next morning I was up early, bathed in hot water as I would have in the peaceful United States, and went down to breakfast, where I had orange juice and an egg and toast, a bit of rationed butter and half of a piece of sugar. The waiter at my table seemed to want to talk to someone who was not English. He told me he was a Swiss, but he had lived twenty years in London; England was his home now. "I had a bit of a scare last night," he said in a low voice as he poured tea into a cup. "What happened?" "The police came during the night and knocked on the door—I hadn't done anything, but still I was worried. Maybe somebody had been talking about me, you know you never can tell." He carefully put down the teapot on the white tablecloth. "I was worried, but they weren't looking for me; they asked when I had seen my neighbour—an Irish fellow." I asked: "What did they want the Irishman for?" And the waiter replied: "I don't know and I didn't ask—it's better not to know anything, not to get mixed up with anybody."

After breakfast I talked awhile to the doorman (he was to disappear three months later). I talked to the clerk at the desk and to the elevator boy, a young man only about nineteen, pale and underfed and earnest (he was to be killed ten weeks later in one of the first big raids).

Returning to my room, I wrote a story about how tense the situation was in London—how everyone was working feverishly, how everyone felt the pressure of time upon him, how everyone seemed to realize there was so much to be done and that at any minute the Germans might be upon them. I wrote about troops arriving from Australia and New Zealand and of seeing Canadians on the streets and of how undefeated the defeated British seemed. Then I wrote about the weather, how fine the sunshine had been and how the ducks were still swimming on the lakes in the London parks and the flowers were still being cared for—that life was continuing as usual in London, that the British in spite of the immediate threat of invasion were still being themselves. To support this last contention I quoted from the *London Times*—here in the midst of war someone called “Nature Lover” had written the editor about night-jars: “Hearing night-jars for the first time you might imagine a fisherman at some unseen pool, unwinding a reel of inordinate length or some queer new type of airplane droning across the heath, for the churring goes on and on.” I also reported with pleasure that one of those wiggy old London judges had come to life sufficiently to yell: “You dirty little skunk” at someone who had written a seditious communication.

While I still was busy typing this story, Maude, the maid, came in with a broom and dust-cloth. She was excited. “The police were here this morning—twice on this floor,” she said, hardly speaking above a whisper. Uneasy, I asked her why they had come. “They took the man in the corner room,” said Maude. “Why? What for?” Maude shook her head. “They came first and asked for the gentleman in the corner room—he was a Czech

and had a lot of money. He used to buy hothouse peaches—pay two shillings apiece for them. I don't know what they wanted with him except that he was a foreigner." Maude was flushed.

"They told him to pack a small bag and come with them," she continued. "I don't know what happened after that, for I ran downstairs—I didn't want to see the man leaving; I didn't want him to have to feel the humiliation."

Maude began to sweep the carpet.

"The second time the police came," she said, "they took the waiter on this floor."

The waiter was a Belgian. Maude said she felt sorry for both the Czech and the Belgian, but she held the government was right to arrest them. "After what happened in Holland and Norway," she continued, "we can't be sure about foreigners. Some of them are against Hitler as much as we are, but we can't run any risks—not at this time. They'll just have to understand that we are threatened with invasion and that we'll do the right thing as soon as we get a breathing-spell. It's terrible we have to throw people into prison," Maude said, "but we must—that's all there is to it; we must at present."

I agreed, but I admit I was not comfortable at that time in England.

During the next few days I worked hard, seeing, listening, going about London. I watched the barbed-wire entanglements growing, I saw the Home Guard marching, I read in the papers that even the choir at Westminster Abbey had joined the voluntary fire services and in the future would be responsible for the protection of

the Abbey against incendiary bombs—in the event of raids during a church service the choir “with all reverent speed” would leave the Abbey. I went to the railway stations to watch women and children coming in from the Kentish towns on their way to safer areas. Some of the children came alone with a gas-mask and a doll and a small bag. It was a sad, stirring sight to see the endless procession of Englishmen moving through the huge barn-like stations of London. Some of them were on their way to the ends of the earth—to Australia and Canada and New Zealand; and heaven only knew when if ever they would get back; no one knew either to what they would return. I was impressed by the courage of these people—by the courage of the children as well as of the fathers and mothers. One day Maude showed me a cartoon of a small English girl who was about to be evacuated—she had a bag in one hand and was saying to a very solemn English butler: “Jenkins, if anyone telephones, please say I have gone to Canada.” Maude said the fathers and mothers were glad to send their children off to the safety of the Dominions. “We don’t know who will come through this war,” she said, “and if all of us here have to go down, we want to feel there will be a part of England left somewhere to carry on for us.”

I walked and looked a great deal and listened, but I did not say much during those first days. I was afraid that if I said anything in public, my American accent would lead me to be taken for a fifth-columnist, for a spy. I was not sure I should not be arrested.

Those were the days of the hush-hush campaign when everyone was being advised by the government to say nothing to anyone. All over England there were posters showing sinking ships going down as a result of a casual

unguarded word; factories were shown being bombed because someone had said something on a train. Everyone was nervous, but just the same I soon noticed that the British continued to talk. They talked by the hour in the pubs, in restaurants, in railway carriages. They constantly talked about the threat of invasion. Often I would hear a man, sipping ale, say to another: "When do you think they'll come?" The man's companion would reply: "Tuesday." And when he would be asked: "Why," he would say: "I have a feeling," or "I read Lord Beaverbrook said it would be Tuesday." Several times millions of people thought invasion would be tried on a certain Friday, on a Monday. I had several hunches myself. Even the Prime Minister had his hunches.

The British at this time also did a lot of talking about France—why had France fallen? Many times I listened to them trying again and again to find in the events of May and early June some clue that would reveal to them how it was possible for one of the world's great empires to fold up overnight. Listening to them it became obvious that the British were Calvinists and northerners—they talked of France in terms of sin. The British could understand the retreat and the physical collapse, the material defeat, but what they were utterly unable to grasp was why the French had not followed the Dutch example—why the government had not retired with the French navy to North Africa, why the government had not left generals behind to surrender what had to be surrendered. I heard the British asking why had France's leaders sold out France for the sake of trying to save their own jobs and pensions, of trying to save their own petty careers?

The British tried to find economic, political, military explanations to give some meaning to France's last hours.

They examined the Communist movement, the Fascist movement; they searched for it in unemployment, in the dole, in every other imaginable possibility. No answer, however, satisfied them. So in the end they came round to morals. "Two of France's cabinet ministers reached Bordeaux with mistresses in their baggage," I heard an old man saying one night at a pub on the Strand. "Reynaud had treason in his bed." A man standing at the bar turned about and replied: "The frogs were always a funny race—when an Englishman breaks the seventh commandment he knows he has committed a sin, but when a Frenchman breaks it he's positively proud."

One day I heard the British Ambassador to Paris, Sir Ronald Campbell, talking about the collapse of France. He was at luncheon at the home of the Secretary of State for India, Mr. Amery. He sat at the head of a beautiful polished dining-table, and Mr. and Mrs. Amery and Mrs. Amery's sister, Mrs. Simon Rodney, and I listened to him for an hour. He had just fled to England and he too was bewildered.

Once Campbell spoke of Reynaud's mistress, of Mandel travelling with a golden blonde.

Scornfully Mrs. Amery remarked to me: "What would the Baptists in America say to that kind of conduct?"

Mrs. Amery asked Campbell what he thought had really happened to Reynaud. Had he really been in a motor-car accident? How had he got that bandaged head? Campbell's answer was that quite likely Madame La Porte put her arm round Reynaud's neck and the Prime Minister drove into a tree.

"What a way for a cabinet minister to act!" said Mrs. Amery.

Sir Ronald Campbell said he had seen Reynaud three

hours before France gave in and that at that time Reynaud fully intended to retreat to North Africa, to leave the generals behind to surrender. "France fell," said Campbell, "in three hours of utter moral collapse."

"The last minutes of France," said Mr. Amery, "must have been like lifting up a stone in a wet place—all sorts of grubby creatures must have begun a tremendous scurrying activity."

Campbell said that when the French delegates had finished talking with Hitler in the railway car, one of them had said to the Germans: "It now becomes our pleasant duty to negotiate with that valorous gentleman who entered the war the day before it was finished."

"Miserable weasel," interrupted Mrs. Amery.

"The Germans roared with laughter," said Campbell. "They thought that remark was very funny. They almost became friendly with the French in the discussion which followed concerning Mussolini."

When that luncheon was over, Mrs. Amery gave me a copy of the poem which Sir Robert Vansittart had written about France. She had copied it herself from the London *Times*:

1904-1940

Was I not faithful to you from the first?
When have I ever failed you since my youth?
I loved without illusion, knew the worst,
But felt the best was nearer to the truth.

You were indulgent too and open-eyed
To the shortcomings I was frank to own.
So we were mingled, destined side by side
To face a world we could not face alone.

Did you keep faith with me? When all was well,
Yes; but I clave to you when all was not.
And, when temptation touched your citadel,
Your weakness won again, and you forgot—

Forgot your Self, and freedom and your friends,
Even interest; and now our vaunted glow
Becomes a blush, as the long story ends
In sorry separation at Bordeaux.

You hate me now; you will not hate me less
If I go on unshaken by your fall,
If, for your sake, devoid of bitterness,
I face the world without you after all.



CHAPTER III

One day I drove to Paddington to go to Plymouth to see what the town the *Mayflower* sailed from was doing. One of the finest trains in England was waiting in the immense station—a very long train with a green engine, puffing soft-coal smoke, a series of red-lacquered coaches, first and third class, a restaurant car. The area we were to cross—the south and southwest of England—had been flown over and bombed almost daily for three weeks, but the train was ready just the same. On the platform, boarding this train, were scores of people, carrying gas-masks and lunches and bunches of flowers and all the other kinds of purely British-looking baggage that Englishmen take with them on journeys. The train also was rapidly filling with bluejackets with seabags, and with soldiers equipped with rifles and considerable heavy gear. At exactly the scheduled minute the train began moving; the engine chugged and the cars took up the silent joggy motion which trains have in England.

Soon we were passing camouflaged factories—unnamed stations flitted by, station after station in a coun-

try without names. The sidings were packed with immense quantities of war materials, and on the roads we saw camouflaged automobiles—the shiny finish which reflected light had been replaced by matt surface cellulose in round, curving patterns, light brown, medium green, dull black. We saw poles in the middle of golf-courses—obstructions to keep planes from landing—old cars, covered with brush, had been dragged into the larger fields and pastures; and there were bastions of cement in highways, and people were out building more bastions. Everywhere we saw men and women working, getting ready to resist the invasion. The train sped on.

A lieutenant commander in the carriage began quietly to talk. Tired, he was travelling across England on his way from a ship that had been in operation in the North Sea to another based in the west. In a distant, remote way he began to remember peace—in the years before the war he had crossed the Atlantic two hundred and ninety-seven times in Cunarders; he had sailed in them all, including the *Queen Mary*. He sighed.

The train ran at high speed—not so fast as formerly in peacetime (speed takes coal), but it ran on, keeping to war schedule, which itself was faster than that of trains like the Crescent Limited in the United States. Soon the engineer began putting on the brakes, firmly and quickly—we were in open country with no station anywhere near. We slowed down to about fifteen miles an hour—we were running into a raid. No train can hope to outrun a plane, so the trains of Britain have adopted slowness as a measure of safety—if the track ahead were bombed, the train could stop very short.

The seaman and I looked cautiously out of the window into a sky drizzling with mist and low watery clouds.

"This is the kind of day we must watch for parachutists," said the sailor. Soon we began to hear airplane motors and a few seconds later we saw them—seven, then ten, then seventeen planes, all flying fast toward the east.

"They're ours," said the sailor.

I sat back, saying: "I hope so."

Once again I read the instructions on the carriage wall—what to do if the train were attacked: we were to stay where we were unless otherwise ordered, we were to lie down if possible, and we were not to touch the door handles or any other metal if there were spots on them—spots might indicate mustard gas.

The zooming above came nearer—a new motor, a new note.

"We only have to go once," said the seaman, and he crossed his legs. "A ship I was on," he continued, "was bombed two hundred and sixty-six times in seventeen days off Norway."

"What happened in the end?" I asked.

"Oh, in the end they hit us," he said.

Off in the distance the sound of the planes moved out of hearing, and shortly after that our train picked up speed again. The raid had gone on, it was over. Naturally, I was alarmed and uneasy, but I soon was to find that all that sort of experience was relative; I was to travel through raids on trains from then until I left England, and I too, like the seaman, was to adopt the attitude of having only one time to go. You acquire perspective in times of great danger, you think very much less of yourself and of the importance of your life. Freedom becomes the thing that counts—freedom is more important than you.

We moved now through miles of green pastures and

fine park-like forests, through the carefully tended countryside of England. The blue larkspur that so many English artists like to paint were blooming in gardens; the larks that so many English poets have sung about were flying, soaring, gliding in the sky; cattle and sheep were grazing, and there were droves of ravens. We saw wild swans, and the sailor, watching them, suddenly said: "What do the animals think about all these planes and bombs?"

At noontime a steward came through our carriage announcing luncheon. We followed him forward and in the dining-car, in the midst of peace and civilization, ordered cold consommé. Then once again the train began to slow down. We ate a ration of meat, two thin slices of beef, and a lot of potatoes and English peas. We afterwards had ice cream—the water ice that is called cream in Europe. Finally, we sipped coffee—black coffee with part of a piece of sugar.

In the midst of peace we were in war. It is one of the curious sensations of air warfare. In the old days armies marched upon you—invasion was a constant; you knew the danger was coming, you had time to prepare, you had warning. But the plane swoops upon you like a high wind. It strikes like lightning and in an hour is two hundred miles away. Always in air war you have the feeling of the mystery of it all. Air war, swooping down on you, is as strange as death itself.

Again the train increased its speed. Passengers slept. Outside, the sun shone for a time. Gradually we made our way toward the sea and again we slowed down, sped on—we moved on through one of the most beautiful counties in England in the midst of raids.

"Isn't that a lovely sight?" said the lieutenant com-

mander with passionate earnestness. "That's England." He studied the vivid landscape, brooding; he was seeing England as Englishmen had not seen it in nine hundred years—we have never seen America in such a light as that. That was home, and it was threatened with invasion. "My wife and I used to come here often in peacetime," the seaman said. "I haven't seen my wife now in three months, haven't even written her—haven't been allowed to."

We ran on, quite close to the sea.

Finally we pulled into Plymouth, an hour and a half behind time, but that did not matter much. The train had come through, the mail and food had arrived, and soldiers and sailors had reached their station. "Not exactly like the New York Central," said the Cunard seaman, "but not too bad for war."

At Plymouth I stayed with Lord and Lady Astor at their house on the top of a high hill overlooking the sea. Mountbatten Airdrome was on one side and Plymouth Navy Yard on the other, and the butler said to me: "We are very exposed."

The Astors, like most people in England, have become greater with the war, have become simpler and kinder people. Lord Astor has been serving as Plymouth's Lord Mayor, and Plymouth is Nancy Astor's constituency in the House of Commons, so since the war started they have spent almost all of their time at Plymouth. It was one of the first towns to be attacked from the air, and one night, during a raid, Nancy Astor said to me: "Waldorf and I have four sons in the army and sometimes I wonder who will go first—the boys or their father

and I." They have stayed at their posts.

I walked that afternoon—across the park where Drake bowled and decided he still had time to finish the game before attacking the Spaniards. Then I went down the steep hill to the old, narrow wharf to the *Mayflower's* dock. I went by myself because I wanted to think. I wanted to think about myself and the Pilgrims and America today and Great Britain. I wanted to probe especially into the last twenty years—to find what was wrong with peace as a nation's thesis. In peace you live for yourself alone, in war you stand for your country. In England I had found, time and again, that I was closer to America than I had ever been before. I found myself thinking of the Puritans and the Pilgrims, of Daniel Boone and the pioneers of the West. You do not stand alone in war, you become a figure in time—you live in the river. Sacrifice becomes a real word, not a platitude, and you see history as progress that has been fought for. War is not so bad as the fear of war. The fear of war does worse things to a country than fighting. Peace must be fought for. That is the only kind of peace worth having.

That evening two wing commanders came to dinner at the Astors' house, a colonel, an alderman, and the wife or widow—she herself did not know—of an officer in a great regiment of Scotland. We ate soup and fish, which was not rationed, and potatoes, a green salad, and stewed fruit without any sugar. They talked about the fall of Paris, about how for an hour they had known the most utter despair in England. Then they had rallied—they told me they had had a feeling of knowing at last where they stood. There was no ally left, no one was left to help them. For some strange reason this knowledge had given the British great courage.

They talked about Dunkirk.

"God made the sea still," said Lady Astor with complete conviction. "It was a miracle."

They talked about the Scots who had made the last stand at Calais, the Scots who knew that they had no chance, but that there could be no Dunkirk unless they held up the Germans. The husband of the wife or widow had been at Calais. "Poor dear," she said of him. She said there had been no word from him, but that she refused to give up hope; something told her to keep hoping.

Nancy Astor told of being stopped by a sentry on an English road and of saying to the sentry: "How are you?" The soldier's reply to her was: "I'm bored." He said sometimes he had rather be back on the beach at Dunkirk, where things had happened. "What did you do at Dunkirk?" Lady Astor asked. The soldier replied: "Well, mostly we prayed."

That evening after the guests had gone, Lord Astor went upstairs to write letters, and Lady Astor and I sat in the living-room and she talked—brilliantly and fluently, with understanding of many things. I discovered then that Nancy Astor by herself is not the Nancy Astor that appears in public. She puts on an act if there are more than three people to listen. But alone, she not only talks simply, she listens. She spoke with deep affection of Lord Astor—of how much she admired him, of how he had fought for his seat in Parliament years ago and at first had been beaten; she spoke of his struggle with ill health; she talked for a long time about her children. She said Lawrence of Arabia needed a woman to protect him—he knew nothing about women; she said sometimes she thought if anything had ever happened to Waldorf Astor she could have married T. E. Lawrence and would

never have touched his hand. Lawrence, she said, had given her one of the five copies of *The Mint*, worth now many thousands of dollars. "But," she added, "I have never read it—I am told it has things in it that I know nothing about. I never knew that side of him, I never want to."

Lady Astor is religious.

She is brittle and mocking in public—something seems to drive her; she deliberately hurts people in public. She is very proud of her seat in Parliament, of being from Virginia and representing Plymouth in the House of Commons. It appeals to her to be the successor of Sir Francis Drake. But she said to me once: "Sometimes in the House of Commons I hear someone say: 'This is an historical day.' It isn't politics that makes history—the politicians don't live; if you want to live you must write. It's the writers who ought to be proudest of what they do."

She continues to be a Virginian, and she comes almost to being an emancipated American. By that I mean she does not care what the British say about us—so many Americans do. She has her own ideas about the United States; to her America is America, and it does not matter to her what other people think it is. One day I found a cheap print of Grant Wood's *American Gothic* stuck in a mirror at Cliveden—Grant Wood's portrait of the grim, gaunt Middle Western farmer with the pitchfork, and the farmer's grim, gaunt wife. "Why have you put that there?" I asked Lady Astor, and she said: "I think the woman is me." She likes to make fun of Americans who ought to have fun made of them. She can do a wonderful imitation of American tourists paying her a visit—"Lady Astor, this is a real pleasure. . . ." And she can

imitate Lady Oxford. One day she told me that Lady Oxford had said that Nancy Astor was too stupid to think and too restless to pray. I burst into laughter. "Brother, what are you laughing at?" inquired Lady Astor. (She calls everyone "Brother.") "I think that's funny," I said. "It is funny," she said, "but you laughed too quick."

I like the quality she has of take as well as give. One time she said to her brilliant niece, Nancy Tree: "Nancy, you ought to get interested in politics." Nancy Tree replied: "I am interested in politics—I've been interested in politics for eighteen months, and during that time I have never seen a windjammer veer in the wind as you have." Lady Astor laughed.

She told Ronald and Nancy Tree and me just after Lord Lothian's death that she thought Lord Halifax should be the next British Ambassador in Washington. I disagreed. "I'm tired of all you young people being against Edward Halifax," she burst forth. "At least, he appointed Philip." Lady Astor told us she had been praying about Lord Halifax. "If it's the right thing, he will be appointed—I feel absolutely certain about it," she said. "Nannie," said Nancy Tree, "I wish you and Lord Halifax would quit praying about yourselves and pray for England for a change." Again Lady Astor laughed.

Lady Astor is one of the meanest, nicest people I know. I have forgiven her for once thinking the thing to do was to appease Hitler.

That night in Plymouth when I went upstairs to bed, I expected to be wakened at any time by the sirens. I still had not heard them and I still was not certain what people did when the alarm was sounded. Lord Astor said:

"If they come over I will call you." During the night, however, a storm blew in from the sea; there was heavy rain, and the Germans did not come over. It was a stormy night, so all accordingly was quiet.

We slept peacefully and next morning we got up early—the Astors do not know what it means to rest. Lady Astor wanted to visit among the voters and she wanted to show me some of the houses that the Germans had bombed. That tour was like accompanying a fishwife. She talked to everyone, went anywhere, and she kept saying to everybody: "We'll take whatever we have to—nothing matters now but England." We walked into a house that was full of soldiers. "I declare, I hate to see big strapping boys like you in a place like this—this used to be our day nursery," she shouted. The soldiers laughed. She said to a sailor on the street: "When did you get in, Brother?" "This morning, Lady Astor," he replied. "Where did you come from?" "From the Mediterranean." "Been fighting the wops, have you? Well, were you frightened?" The sailor replied: "We had to push them into the trenches in the last war, and it looks like we're going to have to smoke them out of port in this one."

We went into several streets where houses had been hit. The people swarmed out when they heard Lady Astor, haranguing in the street. "It will come to all of us sooner or later," she said, "but we must be thankful if it's only our houses they hit—it's people that count, not houses." A delegation from a street called "Home Sweet Home" met her in the road—the shelter was at the far end of their street, at the top of the hill, so far away from those who lived at the bottom of it that sometimes the old and ill would still be on their way after the raid had

started. "Where could a shelter be built at the bottom of the street?" she asked. They took her to a place they thought could be used. "I don't know whether it will be possible or not," she said, "but I'll take it up with the Mayor."

A man patching a bomb crater in a street yelled at Lady Astor: "I read in the paper that Max Schmeling is in training for a parachutist. I'm getting myself in trim for Max."

Mrs. Charles Cload, a fishmonger's wife, told Lady Astor: "We're going to beat the beliving daylight out of them blarsted Europeans."

We made our way down toward the Navy Yard. That part of Plymouth already had been hard hit by disasters and victories—the crews of the *Courageous* and *Warspite* had gone down with Plymouth crews, the *Exeter* had fought with a crew of Plymouth seamen. Some of the women wept in this area when they saw Lady Astor coming. She was very tender with them and said nothing.

We went to a hospital to see some soldiers who had lost their eyesight in France—young boys from Scotland. We went to see some wounded Polish soldiers. In another ward there was a young French boy, sixteen years old, recovering from pneumonia. He spoke only French and none of the nurses could talk to him. He poured out his troubles to Lady Astor. His brother was leaving from Liverpool in two days; he was returning to France, and the boy said he and his brother were the only members of their family still living. The boy said he had rather die than be separated from his brother. "Can this boy go to Liverpool?" Lady Astor asked a doctor. "It would mean a risk," the doctor answered. "Well, it's worth it to him." "He couldn't go unless he went under an oxygen

tent, and that would mean he would have to be sent in a first-class compartment on the train; and he hasn't any money." Turning to the boy, Lady Astor said: "Don't worry, you'll get to Liverpool in time." "Oh, madame," said the boy, bursting into tears.

Lady Astor yelled at an old nurse as we were leaving: "How are you, Sister?" The nurse yelled back: "I've been doing so much sprinting about this place lately that I've fallen off from fifteen stone four to a lovely fourteen stone six" (from two hundred and fifteen pounds to a hundred and ninety-six).

That noon at lunch Lady Astor told Lord Astor the people at "Home Sweet Home" ought to have another shelter, the French boy had to be sent to Liverpool, Ellen Wilkinson ought to be telephoned to in Liverpool to see that the ship did not leave until he got there; those Polish soldiers ought to have someone to teach them English; someone ought to begin teaching those blind boys how to use their hands immediately. I saw then how Lord and Lady Astor worked—she found out what ought to be done; he did it.

That afternoon I was at Plymouth Town Hall when I heard the sound I had been waiting to hear. I recognized it instantly—there was not the slightest doubt. All over the city a metallic cry began—a scream you would never again forget. It had authority and immediacy. It moved upward in a scale of electric notes until it reached its own tone, staying there; then it descended. Up and down, up and down; it gave me the creeps.

Instantly the city began to make for shelter.

Plymouth by this time had lost its false modesty; the people here made no effort to seem casual in an air raid. Baby-carriages began to careen across a park; large stout

women, breathing heavily, dashed by. The old came by with undreamed-of speed. Everyone was rushing for the nearest shelter. Then came quiet and the town waited—the people underground. Under the Town Hall we too waited. About a table sat the city's officials with telephones at hand. Maps were on the walls—maps of each street in each district. The city's officials waited for calls from air-raid wardens in any sector—waited to send ambulances, trucks, fire apparatus, wherever they would be needed.

We sat there in stillness and silence for fifteen minutes. Then the sirens sounded again—a steady note, calm and sustained.

“All clear,” said Lord Astor.

That afternoon Plymouth had a second warning. We were in a General Hospital that time, and we watched nurses piling mattresses on the floor under beds. They then helped recuperating soldiers onto these mattresses and covered them with more mattresses. Then the nurses ran on to take the bedridden to shelter in the basement. All children patients and the old in the hospital were moved too into this basement. Lady Astor held the hand of a woman ninety years old who had been wounded in the head by a piece of falling shrapnel. “We must keep up our courage, Mother,” said Lady Astor.

After dinner that night, I left to get on a train for London, and as I was getting aboard, I again heard the sirens screaming all over Plymouth—the third warning in a dozen hours. All lights were turned out in the train and we pulled out from the station in complete darkness. From that time on, I was a part of the war. For the first time I heard the pound of the guns.

CHAPTER IV

Back the next morning at the hotel in London, I was typing when in came Maude Hall, the maid, with a dust-cloth and a broom. "It's terrible when you think what our boys have had to go through," she said, emptying the wastebasket. "Being in Narvik without any food and without ammunition, and retreating in France, waiting at Dunkirk and being bombed all the time. . . ."

She began to straighten papers on the bureau.

"I got a letter this morning from me old aunt in Southampton," she continued, her face brightening. "She wrote she was writing in a dugout and would mail the letter along with a tin of blackberries as soon as the all-clear sounded. She wrote the house had been hit and a tarpaulin was over the roof, but things can be worse." Maude looked at me, gloating. "How do you think we're doing now?" she inquired.

The pale boy in the elevator, who was to be killed before long, talked about his wife and child as I went down on my way to the cable office. His baby, he said, was a year old—a girl; he called her "the kiddie," and he said

he had tried to get his wife to leave London with the baby, but she had refused. "She says she had rather we all faced everything together." The boy grinned as he added: "I think the real reason is she doesn't trust me alone in a hotel in London."

Late that afternoon I went to Euston Station to see off the last train for the last American ship that was to leave the British Isles for the duration of the war. It was a sad, frightening, serious occasion.

Practically every American in London was there, and in addition to us there were hundreds of English men and women. The platform was packed and the long red train was crowded. Families were being separated and no one knew whether any of them would ever see one another again. They kept up a pretence, however, and many of them as they shook hands said, as people always say in all wars, that they would be back again in three months.

Some of these departing Americans had been in London so long they looked almost British with their Hom-burg hats and burberry coats, with their tweeds and British woollens. One scurrying woman called for a "portah" to help with her bags. "Portah!" she called a second time. No one paid her any attention. "Portah!" Still no heed. "Oh, for Christ's sake," I heard her mutter, "where in hell is a porter?"

These homeward-bound Americans took mountains of baggage with them; they had practically everything, including dogs and canary-birds.

Finally, just before dusk, there was a blast from a whistle and the train slowly began to pull away. Handkerchiefs fluttered and thousands shouted the final farewells. We watched and waved until we could see nothing, then we turned toward the gate. The last train had

gone, and all of us who had stayed behind knew then that whatever was to happen would be for us as well as for the British. German bombs would not bounce off us simply because we carried American passports in our pockets. We had burned all our bridges, and from then on not even our own government could be expected to do anything for us. For me it was the all-time low for all of my months in London. None of us had anything to hide from one another that night on that platform—I saw some desperate sobbing.

A few days after that—it was the middle of July now—Ray Sprigle of the Pittsburgh *Post Gazette* and I caught a train at Waterloo Station and started out for Dover. Ray had arrived in London about the time I had—his paper had sent him to Europe, he said, to appease him, to keep him from delving any further into an investigation he had been making about one of the Roosevelts. Ray had won the Pulitzer Prize for his stories about Senator Black of Alabama, and having polished that off, he had then turned his full attention to a member of the Presidential family. They told him in Pittsburgh to forget about the Roosevelts, they told him never even so much as to mention that story to them again. Then they had suggested: “How about a trip to London?”

I liked Ray Sprigle. He was a forthright American, wore a cowboy hat, smoked a corncob pipe. One day when I was going to the Embassy I tried to get him to go with me, but he said no, thanks, he had no intention of ever going there. When I asked why, he said: “It’s full of Democrats.” This was his first visit to Europe and he told me he was disappointed in Westminster Abbey.

He added, however, he also had been disappointed in Niagara Falls. His idea of something first class in churches, he said, was the Mellon church in Pittsburgh.

He doubted everything, he especially disbelieved anything he read in the papers. He had no use for cabinet ministers, he believed in interviewing the simplest people; so while the rest of us were talking to Beaverbrook and Bevin, Sprigle was poking about in Covent Garden and Whitechapel. One day he came in announcing: "Say, do you know what?—the poor folks are getting gypped in this city."

Sprigle wanted to go to Dover to see what it looked like to stand in England and see France; he wanted to know how it felt to stand on the white cliffs and watch the English Channel; he wanted to see what people did at a time like this in such a place as Dover. We travelled third class, sitting silent at first as both of us were afraid if we spoke we would be suspected as aliens. Ray lit the corn cob, however, and soon began to talk to me in a voice that could be heard from one end of the coach to the other—he was irrepressible. He talked about his seven-year-old daughter in Pittsburgh and about how nice it would be for her to have someone from England to play with; he said he had been thinking it over and had decided he was going to find two English girls, seven years old, and send them to stay with his daughter—two nice plain little English girls from a good working-class family, none of those seven-year-old ladies for him. Then he talked about swans—swans cost fifteen dollars a pair in Pittsburgh, and in England you could buy them for almost nothing; he had inquired about prices of swans; he would like to take back a couple of swans, too, to Pennsylvania. He puffed hard on the pipe. "Say," he

said a few moments later, "doesn't anything go on in Edinburgh or Manchester or Liverpool? You don't see any news from any of those places in the London papers. There's nothing in the London papers but London. I'd like to go to all those cities and see what they're like, and I'd like to interview some of those English traitors that they've got in jail. How is it that an Englishman can be a traitor to his country?"

There were four soldiers in our carriage. Up until this time they had sat silently listening to Sprigle's monologue. Now they could stand it no longer, so one of them said to Ray: "Are you an American?"

"Sure," said Ray. "My name is Sprigle. I come from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania."

The boys grinned, and from then on they talked to both Ray and me all the way to Dover. Months have passed since that train journey across Kent, but I still remember what one of those boys told us. He had been at Narvik and he told us about firing a rifle at German bombers, about having no food and being obliged to wander through woods in snow, tired and unshaved and hungry and ill-equipped. Then one day someone came to tell them a ship had come. It was to take them home, to England. "Oh, those were lovely words," said the soldier, smiling at us. "I couldn't believe they were true—home to England." He said that once aboard that ship he had slept all the way across the North Sea; when he had waked up, they were arriving in Scotland.

Sadly and wisely that soldier said to us: "It doesn't matter how much personal courage you have if all you're armed with is a rifle, and the enemy has a dive-bombing plane."

The lesson I learned from those soldiers was that I need

have no more fear about talking to strangers in England. I found out the English did not think of Americans as aliens.

The farmers of Kent that day were picking hops and cutting hay. We saw them in the carefully tilled fields, working. The wheatfields were turning gold, and in the gardens about the houses the blue larkspur was in bloom just as it was along the line to Plymouth, and there were beds of roses. The flowers were in blossom regardless of the war. We saw men herding sheep into trucks and onto railway cars. These sheep belonged to the Romney Marsh breed, they were world-famous sheep, and the government was evacuating a hundred thousand of them from the vulnerable lowlands of Kent to twelve distant English counties where they would be safer.

At one of the stations along the way, a girl got aboard and sat down in our carriage. Hardly glancing at any of us, she settled herself and began to read with complete absorption—she was far away in Georgia in the American war between the states, for the book she was reading was *Gone with the Wind*. The railroad from London to Dover followed the shore line of the English Channel after it reached Folkestone; it moved in and out of tunnels through chalk cliffs—a clear target, visible to Germans in the occupied ports of France. I did not feel at all comfortable in such a situation, and apparently the soldiers did not either—they became still and silent. But the girl did not seem to be aware of anything outside of the pages of the heavy brown book.

Finally Sprigle asked her: "How far have you got, miss?"

Looking up, the girl said: "Rhett is in prison and Scarlett is getting ready to go see him."

From the railway station Ray and I walked to the Dover police station, where we showed our passes and registered with Marshal Bolt, the Chief Constable, who later on, during the August battles, was to become a good friend of a score of journalists from the United States. Marshal Bolt wore a bowler hat and fascinated us by his charming manners—they were just like those of Scotland Yard detectives in *Sherlock Holmes*.

“Dover people,” he told us, “are used to wars; we’re Cinque Port people; we’ve always had to fight.”

He told us we could go wherever we liked, so we wandered down the narrow winding main street, walked on beyond the square where David Copperfield had waited for his aunt. Soon we came out on the beach, and there across twenty miles of choppy water was German-occupied France. I don’t know how Ray felt, but I felt as if I were standing on the edge of a volcano that might explode any minute. The feeling I had was that if I tiptoed and held my breath, maybe things would be a little safer—the feeling you have when practically anything would start you off on a run.

A chill summer wind was blowing in from the North Sea, and the clouds lifted and captured France was a blue haze on the horizon.

Waves broke along the beach, a British flag fluttered above Dover Castle on the cliffs. Companies of soldiers in battle dress were stringing barbed wire along the shore, and there were guns everywhere, with men standing by.

“How does it feel to be stationed at a place like this?” Ray asked a soldier.

Grinning, the soldier said: “Well, this morning I decided I’d bathe in the sea, and just as I started, Jerry

came over. They dropped a bomb—I could see it coming—and everywhere I ran, the bomb would follow; it would swerve in my direction.”

Ray and I walked quickly up the beach and back, we stopped at a pub for a glass of beer, we bought a sack of tomatoes and a pack of cigarettes at a store, and then we hurried back to the railway station and caught the first train out. Safely back in London, we cabled to America about the bravery of Dover.

At the pub where we bought the beer, the barmaid was a middle-aged woman with curly hair dyed red; she had on a black silk dress and wore numerous rings on practically all of her fingers. From the minute we came in until we left, she never stopped talking. There was plenty of food in Dover, she said, business was fair, the old folks and the children had been sent off, the rest of the town was staying. “England’s an island—we must stay put.” Everyone, she said, had his own idea about when the Germans were coming—some felt it would be the full of the moon, some thought the next high tide, some expected them Friday. Personally, she didn’t look for them until August 15—the 15th was Hitler’s day; Hitler was guided by the stars. She said that if you ate carrots you could see better in the blackouts; she said seagulls knew when German planes were coming—they would soar up and flutter, and squall.

This fantastic woman told us about dive-bombing and shelling and about how she kept one eye on a gun up on the cliff—she pointed to it through the window. If the gun was covered with tarpaulin she knew everything was all right, but if it was uncovered she said: “Hello,

we're in for a raid." The boys at the gun, she said, were ready before the siren.

Suddenly, with a flow of words that were full of sheer beauty, this barwoman told us that you became a giant and the plane made you feel it was coming straight toward you—you lifted your arms and looked up and became a crucified figure.

"If we must go, we must go," she said; "the way I feel is if the bomb has 'Mary Swift' on it, there is nothing I can do about it—my time has come."

At the cigarette store a gnome-like man, who looked as if a rabbit would scare him, told us about going out in a boat to help bring the men home from France. Like Lady Astor, he believed it was God who had stilled the English Channel. "It was a miracle."

They had worked twenty-four hours out of twenty-four, getting the men back, and at Dover the women had been wonderful. Women who ordinarily would have fainted at the sight of blood had turned to and had taken charge of soldiers who had been horribly wounded; they had bathed and dressed men who had been wounded days before—men who had lain on stretchers without attention, many of them Frenchmen. They had given anæsthetics to men who had been terribly burned, and when the men had become unconscious they had scrubbed the burnt flesh clean and then had covered the entire burnt area with a tannic jelly preparation.

They had worked like hell in Dover during the time of Dunkirk.



CHAPTER V

Those were perfect summer days and nights during July in England—long warm sunny days, one after another, and bright dry nights; England was having the most glorious summer it had had in thirty years, and day after day and night after night we continued to expect the invasion. As the moon got full, the tension increased throughout the island—the Germans had bombed Boulogne during the full moon of June; during the full moon of July they would bomb London. Gradually the July moon swelled—big and yellow, it was like a full moon in America, yellow like the moon over Miami.

One morning Maude Hall came into the room with an astrological chart—Jupiter and Saturn were visible now after midnight, Venus was the most brilliant star of the dawn, Arcturus was high in the night sky, Vega almost overhead . . . the brightest star north of the celestial equator was Capella. Hitler followed the stars, Maude said, and someone had told her at the vegetable market in Covent Garden that Venus would soon be in conjunction with the moon, and that was Hitler's sign.

At breakfast another morning the waiter brought me a newspaper with the orange juice—he pointed to an item from Stockholm which said the Swedes had heard from the Norwegians that the Germans would begin the British blitzkrieg on Saturday. Lord Beaverbrook also had a hunch about that Saturday. My own hunch was that the Germans would come over on Sunday—London on Sunday even in the middle of a war was still as silent as a peacetime tomb. I thought Hitler would come over and catch the British resting.

Finally, as the days and nights went by and brought no Germans, we gave up guessing; we expected them, but as our old doorman said: “Nobody knows when they’re coming except Hitler, and he’s got to wait until he dreams.”

Meanwhile, everyone did everything. The barbed-wire entanglements grew longer, the drilling continued on house-tops and in the London squares, the waiter joined the fire-fighting unit in his street, the elevator boy on his day off dug trenches in a park in Lambeth; every day more ships arrived from overseas with troops and guns and ammunition, but no one in England was deluded—we knew England was going to stand, but we knew it would have to fight with but little more than courage. The British had left their best tanks and guns, even their rifles, in France. Sometimes you would see squads of troops go by with only one man in four, with only one in six, armed with a rifle. We heard the government had sent word to Canada to send every gun and every round of ammunition, even to send the training ships at the Canadian air fields. To encourage the population of the capital, the government deliberately gave a few days’ leave to thousands of Canadian, New Zealand,

and Australian soldiers. It did the people good to see the men from the Dominions around them, and they began to talk about the island fortress that was guarded by the Empire. They called it the island fortress, but what it put me in mind of was Daniel Boone's stockade in Kentucky—the Indians were coming and the settlers had rushed inside and slammed the gates behind them. Very often as we waited for the battle to start, I would think of Boonesboro—it, too, had known what this was like; its war had been a total war. The frontier then had been the West; now London's frontier was the sky—London, the greatest city in the world, had become a frontier town.

In private almost everyone admitted the assault would be terrific. Thousands and tens of thousands would die. I remember talking one night with Frank Kelly of the New York *Herald Tribune* about what would probably happen—maybe one in two of us would be killed; maybe block after block in London would be razed to the ground. Later on, when the blitzkrieg finally did get under way, we were astonished that it was no worse than it was. The blitzkrieg was to teach us that war was not so bad as the fear of war.

We used to talk with the Canadians about the perils of our situation—we, like they, were from a continent, were accustomed to the feel of three thousand miles of land behind us; we and the Canadians told one another, but we never told the English, that it downright alarmed us to find ourselves on an island completely surrounded by water.

It goes without saying that the Americans in London got along by instinct with the army from Canada. They used the same words we used, they looked like us, there

was a freshness to the colour of their faces, an eagerness of look that distinguished Canadians from Australians and New Zealanders and from the soldiers of the British Isles. Maybe it was what they ate, maybe it was the way the North American sun had shone on them—whatever it was, it was something. We could tell them.

One night out of the blackout—I had just come out of a building and had not become accustomed to the dark—a voice said to me: “Say, friend, can you tell me where there’s a prophylactic station?” “Are you a Canadian?” I asked. “Sure,” replied the voice. “I am an American,” I said. The Canadian said: “Well, Jesus Christ!”

I used to watch the English trying to be nice to the Canadians. They tried to the best of their ability to be hearty and friendly with the men from the Dominions. Shyly the English would speak to them on the streets, and then they would write letters to the papers saying that more ought to be done to make these lads feel at home. The English determined to break down their own reserve. Once I saw two Canadian boys, both in battle dress, standing on London Bridge, watching the flow of the Thames. Soon a very motherly English woman approached them and warned them of the kind of girls they would meet on the streets of London. “They’re floosies,” she said, “they’ll take your money.” The boys grinned and replied: “Yes, ma’m.” Another English woman said to them: “I’ve been to Canada—been right across, stayed a month in Winnipeg. Marvellous place—Winnipeg. Perfectly fascinating, as a matter of fact; so alert, so full of ginger, and the housewives do their own housework and still lead a lit’ry life. Amazing place—Winnipeg.” The lady moved on, the boys laughed.

Once at the Waldorf an Englishman said to Ray

Sprigle: "Some of those Canadians are rough." Furiously Ray replied: "What do you think they came over here for—to eat cream puffs? This is a war."

I liked those Canadians in London and I used to talk to them and sometimes buy some of them dinner or a glass of beer. They were young and homesick and far from home.

I remember one evening seeing three of them standing in front of the cable office in the Strand, looking silently at the people passing. "I'm an American," I said; "come on with me and let's eat." "Boy, oh boy," one of them answered, "we've got fifteen cents between us."

They were strapping young North American soldiers, all belonging to the Seaforth Highlanders of British Columbia, all from Vancouver—from the Pacific Ocean no less. I told them who I was and then they told me who they were, giving their names and their numbers—Private S. E. Lindgren, K52396, Private W. A. MacKenzie, K52-181, Private R. L. Clark, K52286. I asked Seaforth Highlander Lindgren where in Scotland his folks had come from, and Lindgren said: "From Sweden." MacKenzie said some of the Highlanders from British Columbia were Indians. "You should see them in their kilts."

The boys went with me to the Waldorf. They had come into London from weeks in the field, from sleeping on the ground between blankets and rubber groundcloths; they said it had been months since they had eaten off a linen tablecloth with china dishes and silver. They tipped through the hotel lobby, trying to make as little fuss as possible with their clodhopper soldier shoes; they

checked their gas-masks and tin helmets at the cloak-room; then they came in and sat back to enjoy themselves; they said they wanted to listen to the music. One of the boys ran his hands over the cloth. "Boy, oh boy," he said, "it feels like satin."

I ordered beefsteak and French fried potatoes and peas and ice cream and coffee.

The orchestra played "Somewhere over the Rainbow." Full of news and enthusiasm, the boys began to talk about their outfit and about Vancouver and how it felt to be six thousand miles from home. The boys in their regiment had flown in from the Yukon, a thousand miles from Vancouver, ex-Mounties had come with them to England, and they had Bill Robertson, who used to be a jockey at Santa Anita in California. They had Yanks, too—fellows from the west coast, from Tacoma and Seattle, and one was a millionaire's son—his old man was a lumberman from San Francisco. Gosh, Vancouver seemed a long way away, but they were not sorry they had come to England—no, sir, they were not sorry; they were glad, and all they wanted was a chance to get at the Nazis. "We want to fight—that's what we came for." They cut into the steaks—they were rationed steaks and there was not too much to them.

They said it got them down when the limeys came back from Norway and then came back from France and said to them: "What, are you lads still here?" They said it was wonderful what the British had done at Dunkirk. The British, they said, had not really been defeated—at least not in spirit. The British thought they were getting along all right, they were advancing, and then came the word they were to retreat—they thought they were doing fine and then they got orders to be ready to fire at any

angle. They told me about the stand the Scots had made at Calais.

"We like the Scots," Lindgren said simply. "They're fine, friendly people."

Clark asked the other two boys: "Do you think we'll ever get a whack at Jerry?"

"Sure we will," said Mackenzie.

"Damned if I don't believe we'll be old men before they give us Canadians a chance," said Lindgren. Laughing, he added: "We're restless—that's all that's wrong with us—we've been over here nine months and they haven't let us off this island. We just go from one part of it to another, digging trenches. We call ourselves McNaughton's Travelling Circus."

The boys talked about America and about Canadian distances and they laughed about the way the English made preparations to travel from Glasgow to London. "It's only four hundred miles," MacKenzie said, "but you'd think they were getting ready to go to Hong Kong." MacKenzie said the English thought the Canadians were crazy the way they went from Edinburgh to London and even Northern Ireland on week-ends.

They talked about Glasgow on Saturday night—about the rest of Scotland. "We like Scotland," Clark said, "Scotland is like the U.S.A.—and I'm not kidding either; when I say that about Scotland I mean it as a compliment to Scotland."

We finished the steak and potatoes and waited for the ice cream.

"I'd like to be having a chocolate ice-cream soda back in Vancouver, B.C.," said Lindgren. "I get homesick thinking about chocolate ice-cream soda."

"The only time I get homesick," said Clark, "is when

the papers come and I read about them going on beach parties and taking trips to the mountains."

"I get homesick," said MacKenzie, "when I get letters and when I write them."

Next they talked about their company sergeant and the cook—what they said can be imagined. They talked about pup tents—one good thing about the war was that armies now are mobile, soldiers did not have to pack pup tents on their backs, they had baggage trucks in this war. The Canadian army, they said, was so mobile they could get going any time within an hour. They had learned to hide themselves like Indians. "You'd be surprised how little you can hide behind, once you've discovered the trick."

They had a goat that wouldn't eat English grass—all it would eat was cooked Canadian food, and its favourite liquid was beer. They hoped Franklin D. would be re-elected; they asked me: "What are we going to do about Japan?"

I had several letters from those boys after that—letters that told about who had had influenza and who had been injured on motorcycles and what progress they had been making on the hockey team.

Months later Clark came into London again and called on me. We were deep in the blitzkrieg by that time; Clark had burned one of his hands fighting incendiary bombs and he had helped pull some dead people out of a bombed house; naturally he was depressed. So we bought some beer and I took him to the Dorchester to have dinner with some young English boys and girls whom I knew. Like Clark, these young people also were

on leave from guns and planes and camps. They told us it was much simpler and more satisfying to live in England in 1940 than it had been in 1938. They told us about the series of balls they had gone to in August 1939, all knowing they might be the last ones they would ever attend—really, they said, they had not cared either, for most of them had not really cared for that sort of life. Some of them talked to Clark about Vancouver, about the chance they would have of going there some day to work. A flier in the air force, breaking into the conversation, said: "There won't be any some day for me." No one reproved the airman for making such a statement. A young nurse added she did not believe this war would be followed by another jazz age. They were very serious that evening, but when the orchestra played, I noticed that they danced.

Clark was coming back again the next night, but he did not show up. I was worried, for he was not the sort of boy to make appointments and not keep them; I was worried because he seemed to be unaware of the danger of bombs at night in London. I asked Alastair Buchan and Larry Audrain at Canada House to see if he was all right. Then I checked out, I came back to America. I hope nothing happened.

During those days in July I was getting settled—I was meeting people and making the rounds of places. Some of the Labour ministers in the new Churchill Cabinet, I found, had adopted the American custom of holding press conferences—Bevin, Morrison, Dalton. Even the Tory ministers were much more accessible to the American press than they formerly had been—all of them could

be reached except Greenwood and the Prime Minister. No one cared whether Greenwood was accessible or not—he was the man who had said he hated the press, and the Americans had said it was O.K. with them; their attitude toward Greenwood was that he would have to make news indeed before any of them would cable a line about him to their American papers. The Prime Minister was still old-fashioned about press conferences—he was old-fashioned about many things—but Brendan Bracken, his secretary, could always tell us what we wanted to know. We liked Brendan—a tousled, red-headed, bespectacled man about our own age, a brilliant conversationalist using a tremendous vocabulary. Brendan, like the Prime Minister, had lived a hard, worldly life and it always interested me to listen to him talk about his concern and the Prime Minister's concern whenever an appointment came up in the Church of England. They were hard-boiled, tough politicians, and here they were giving more thought to places in the Church than to stations in the army—they could take their chances with generals but when it came to a bishop, they asked over and over: Were the candidates saintly men? Were they pious?

Bevin interested us always. He was frank and understood the use of news and he also had ideas and a plan and was looking far ahead—he was thinking of the future. Like Churchill he knew how to appeal to the people, but where the Prime Minister was exhorting them to resist the Nazis at the moment, Bevin was outlining to them the kind of England he wanted for tomorrow. He talked of more education, of more privileges for the poor, and instead of using Disraeli and Gladstone and Kipling as his heroes, he talked about John Wesley and John Knox. Bevin told the British about there having always been in

England a great body of working people who had fought for freedom and justice, who had held out for the oppressed. He talked more like an American than an Englishman—a Whig who made us think of John L. Lewis. He was a reformer with fire in his belly, and the people were beginning to think of him as Prime Minister after Churchill. They were examining him and making up their minds, and Bevin, except for his speeches, was lying low—learning like Lincoln to labour and to wait.

We saw Dalton, a theorist and a professor, and Morrison, who seemed to diminish with power rather than to increase. We saw Beaverbrook and Anthony Eden, and one day we gave a luncheon for Lord Halifax that was memorable because Mallory Browne of the *Christian Science Monitor*, in introducing the British Foreign Secretary, said: "Don't shoot the piano-player, he is doing the best he can."

It was Churchill though who at that time dominated London. He was making his wonderful speeches—the great speeches that were being quoted round the world. The American journalists in London crowded into the gallery at the House of Commons whenever Churchill spoke. The House, very small and dark, was more like a church to us than like Congress—it was more like a synod of the Presbyterian Church than a session of the House of Representatives in Washington. And like a church moderator Churchill would rise and command the scene. The acoustics of the place were terrible, the lighting was worse. On a throne, presiding like a cardinal, sat the wigged speaker, and about the Prime Minister in rows of stiff leather stuffed pews were the right honourable members of the Mother of Parliaments. The Prime Minister, stooped and red of face, always very flushed, would ar-

range a sheaf of papers on a stand before him and begin his speeches in such a small, still voice that automatically his very tone would command attention. As he proceeded, he would take off and put on a pair of horn-rimmed glasses, he would finger a ring on one of his little fingers, then he would raise his voice and cut loose with a series of roaring sentences that would bring cheers from everyone present. Churchill on those occasions was like someone out of Dickens—an old-fashioned man in an old-fashioned costume. Always he was dramatic, he played on the dramatic; his speeches were as perfectly timed as sermons are in American Negro churches. They were marvels of feeling and beauty. Churchill on all those occasions was perfect, and there was not the slightest doubt about him—he was England's man, he was equal to the hour.

I met many people during those days in London—Duff Cooper, the Minister of Information, and Diana Cooper; Ronald Tree, who was Duff's parliamentary private secretary, and Nancy Tree, the niece of Lady Astor. I met David Bowes-Lyon, the Queen's brother, and the Earl of Waldegrave and the Marquess of Dufferin and Ava. Duff at that time was under attack, as the hush-hush campaign had backfired—the British had refused to keep silence. I learned then that he had courage and I learned also that he wanted to help American journalists get their news through; he believed in publishing everything that was possible, trusting in the British and American people to deal with the truth. He stood up for us against the Air Ministry, the War Office, and the Admiralty, all three of which at first regarded news as a nuisance. Diana, I afterwards was to learn, also had courage—she could have left London when the blitz began, but she stayed on; she

said Duff would not get the right food if she were not there and he would be late to his appointments. She stayed on at the Dorchester Hotel and never got used even to the sound of the guns—each time the big naval gun would fire in Hyde Park, Diana would wince.

Nancy Tree at that time was deciding that England would soon need mobile canteens—she had been thinking about the problem of feeding people ever since the evacuation from Dunkirk. As the soldiers had returned to England, she had worked at a railway siding, dishing out soup, and she had said to herself then: “How will people eat during the blitzkrieg? How can they cook in a town that is being bombed?” Nancy began to think about mobile canteens; she bought several herself and began writing to people she knew in the United States. In the weeks to follow, these friends sent her thirty-five canteens and the American Inter-Allied Relief added another thirty-five; and she began feeding raided areas around Oxford. She and the wives of farmers and day labourers in her neighbourhood were to keep seventy canteens going.

David Bowes-Lyon and Geoffrey Waldegrave and Basil Dufferin talked like Southerners. They were land-owners and like Southerners they talked about land. I understood them automatically, for I come from South Carolina and belong to the cotton country and the long generations of a family—I know what it means to be anchored in time and space to personal discipline and tradition, to owe responsibility to the past and to the future. I was astonished to learn how similar the troubles of these Britishers resembled ours in the Carolinas—mechanization was moving upon them, they were still fighting machines, they were still hoping to find some way of con-

tinuing an individualistic, independent farming life. But they knew, just as I did, that industrialization was mowing all of us down, one after another. Even farming was becoming industrial, was depending for its profit on the utilization of bigger units. Tractors had reached England and Scotland, and Alexander Hamilton's ideas were winning even at Balmoral, and Jefferson's ideal was receding. One day Robert Hudson, the British Minister of Agriculture, told me that when this war was over, there probably would be no landowners in Great Britain—it probably would not pay farmers to own land, they in all likelihood would be tenants of the state.

I met Richard Law, Financial Secretary of the War Office. Young and conservative, Dick Law is Bonar Law's son and sits in Commons for the fishermen of Hull. I used to take long walks with Dick and listen to him talk about education—the aim of education, he believed, had gone wrong; it was being used too much for worldly competition and too little for the spirit. How could that be shifted—how? he would ask. How? When the war was over, Dick wanted a harder, simpler, happier life for England—a life that would be more contented for everyone and more secure.

And one day I met Mrs. John Wells, a goldsmith's wife—an old woman who was poor and who lived in the borough of Lambeth, south of the Thames River, in one of the poorest parts of London. Waiters and stage-hands and small artisans lived in Lambeth, back of the Episcopal Palace of the Archbishop of Canterbury—that woolly-headed relic who never had a liberal idea in his entire life. Later on, when the bombs began falling, the Archbishop was to whine about bombs, to drag them into his Sunday sermons. But there was nothing whining about

Mrs. Wells. An old member of the Labour Party, she told me one day when I went to see her that Lambeth had taken great heart since Churchill had stated that London would be laid flat before it would save itself like Paris. Putting a tea-kettle on the fire, she said Lambeth was getting ready, street by street and house by house, and the people were going to fight with knives and hammers and shovels. She said: "I've got a butcher knife myself and I'm going to take one German with me to glory."

Mrs. Wells placed teacups on a table, apologized because there was no sugar. The people of Lambeth, she said, were inspired by the example of Madrid. The working people of Madrid, she continued, had fought better than conscripted armies in Poland and France, and what the people of Madrid could do, the people of London could do. She wanted the government to take over every empty factory in Lambeth and turn it into a munition plant—it would turn the borough into a military area, but that did not matter. Also she wanted to see the people eating in communal kitchens; it would be a more efficient way of saving food and would enable England to fight longer. She liked the free and easy ways of the colonial soldiers and she told me a story about a Canadian private who had not saluted an English colonel. The colonel had asked for an explanation, and the Canadian had said: "I beg your pardon, I thought you were one of our own bloody officers."

Lambeth meant to win the war, Mrs. Wells said, and when the war was over, the borough meant to help create an England where families of five would have more to live on than forty shillings a week.

"Bevin," she said, "is no Ramsay MacDonald, and don't you forget—the Home Guard has guns."

CHAPTER VI

July rolled on, the great summer days continuing—fine and warm and sunny, and on every hand you heard Englishmen saying that not in forty years had there been such glorious weather. The Germans were bombing Wales and the southern towns, spasmodically and without pattern—bombs were falling on England, but none as yet had been dropped on London. In London we still had to hear the sirens.

Tea was rationed; the Chancellor of the Exchequer presented the emergency budget.

That was terrific news in England—the rationing of tea. Maude burst into the room, the paper in her hands, the morning it was announced. “Oh, dear,” she said, “it’s very little.” The newspaper had figured it out that the two ounces allowed each week would equal twenty-eight teaspoonfuls. “It depends on the spoon,” said Maude. “That’s four cups a day and I’ve been drinking six.” Then as usual Maude adapted herself to this new situation. “I’ll let the leaves stay in the pot, and I’ll do a little re-brewing.” Carefully she folded the paper, and as she

started for the door, she said: "Anyhow, the Germans have less than we have."

The emergency budget, you would have thought, would have been terrific news too, but it wasn't. It was the biggest budget in British history, and the taxes it imposed were staggering, but it caused only passing discussion. I attended the session at the House of Commons when it was introduced by Sir Kingsley Wood, the Chancellor. The figures reeled on for an hour, and I got one of the surprises of my life—I saw members of the House dozing in their seats. The meaning of money, I was afterwards to learn in England, was losing its orthodox significance. People were talking more about the Empire's ability to work, to produce, rather than about its ability to pay in pounds and pence. Frequently you heard people saying money should not penalize a nation, it should be made a servant of the people. After the blitz really began, I one day became aware that no one in London was estimating the damage in pounds to the city—I was aware that not once had I ever heard anyone say a hundred-thousand-pound building had been hit. The British seemed, at least for the time being, to have lost their sense of property. It was freedom that was dear.

I went often at this time to the Ministry of Information, meeting censors and ministry officials, attending press conferences. I also saw newspaper friends that I had not seen for a long time. I saw reporters dressed up as officers in armies—Euan Butler, who used to be with the *London Times* in Washington, was a captain; Geoffrey Cox of the *London Daily Express* had joined the New Zealand forces. Somehow I could never accustom myself to seeing newspapermen in the role of soldiers. Few of us could—not even those who themselves had become sol-

diers. I remember one day walking into Canada House with Sam Robertson of the Canadian press and meeting Larry Audrain, formerly a photographer with *Life*. Larry now was a press officer at Canadian Military Headquarters, and on this particular day he was turned out in full battle dress, carrying even a pistol in a holster. "Larry," said Sam, "for God's sake, who gave you a gun?"

One day Roger Machell came in, wearing a major's uniform and his whole left arm in a plaster cast. Roger used to be with the London *Daily Telegraph* in New York and later had been liaison officer between the War Office and the American correspondents in France. "Roger," I asked, "what in the world happened?" He asked if I had read a story which Bill Stoneman of the Chicago *Daily News* had written from Boulogne telling about how thrilling it had been to stand in a hotel and watch the Germans dive-bombing another hotel about fifty yards away. "Well," said Roger, "I had the slightly more thrilling experience of being in that other hotel."

Roger's arm was being given the Spanish treatment. The surgeons had cleansed the wound and covered it up with plaster. The stench was terrific, but his arm would heal. Had this been the other World War, they had told him, he would have lost his arm.

Toward the end of July an Ontario regiment arrived with about a hundred and fifty American recruits, so I went down to Aldershot to see them. They were like any hundred and fifty Americans gathered from all sections of the Union—irrepressible, light-hearted, colourful, rich in variety and in personality. They had brought along baseball bats and banjos, and already the Canadians had a

name for them—they were Duignan's Yanks; the Americans called themselves the Posse. Duignan was a deputy sheriff from Illinois, and in order to make things strictly legal he had brought along his badge and he and the boys were going to arrest Hitler in the name of the State of Illinois.

"The Posse," said Duignan, "has some mighty mean men."

Included in the outfit were truck-drivers, Pennsylvania coal-miners, a former member of the Lincoln Brigade in Spain, a member of the Michigan legislature, a clown from Arkansas who called himself a possum-hunter. There were butcher boys and soda-jerkers and Californians and boys who had done hitches in the U.S. Army and in the Marine Corps.

I had Sunday dinner with them and afterwards sat around for most of the afternoon. They were interesting and I liked them; they went to a lot of trouble to appear gay, but I knew how they were feeling, and they knew that I knew—here they were, a hell of a distance from home, on an island with no chance of getting home until the end of the war. They had reached their destination, the trip was over, and here they would be stuck until England had won. I was sort of proud and at the same time sort of sorry for them—proud because they had the restless quality that has always moved Americans, sorry because the time had come for them—as it comes for all adventurers—to pay the price. They had given up jobs—one of them had given up a commission in the Marine Corps Reserve to become a private in the Canadian Army; they had paid their own way to the nearest Canadian recruiting station; they even had had to give up their American citizenship, although none of them had the

least intention of ever permitting any kind of law keep them from always being American. Simply, they had crossed the border and when the Canadian recruiting officer had asked them where they had been born, they had said Toronto, Winnipeg, Montreal—whatever Canadian place came into their minds. I asked one of them that question myself. I said: "Fellow, where were you born?" And he replied: "Ah was bahn in Quebec."

I asked them why they had come—we discussed their reasons for quite a while. They had come because their lives had been monotonous, they had wanted adventure. A boy from Pittsburgh said "love trouble" had been his reason. They laughed and joked about their reasons, but they were serious when Francis Myers, a Texan, said to me: "We also got a sneaking feeling we'd like to help."

I returned to London that night, and early the next morning I started out with nine other American correspondents to visit one of the bomber units of the Royal Air Force. We went as guests of the British government, and before we left in Daimler limousines from the Air Ministry in Whitehall, we had been given programs, covering in detail the entire trip.

The program follows (I print it with my own deletions because I think it is interesting to see what happened to American correspondents on an official journey):

On arriving at — tea will be served at the officers' mess of No. — Group Headquarters, Bomber Command.

6.00 P.M. Visitors will be conveyed to the — Hotel where rooms have been reserved.

- 6.30 P.M. Sherry in the private lounge of the hotel. The Air Force officer commanding No. — of the Bomber Command, Air Vice Marshal — hopes to take this opportunity of meeting his visitors, subject to the pressure of his engagements.
- 7.00 P.M. Depart by car for R.A.F. Station —.
- 7.45 P.M. Dinner in Mess.
- 8.45 P.M. A short tour of the principal points of interest at the station will be available to visitors. The tour will include a close inspection of a Wellington Heavy Bomber, and a visit to the crew-room preparatory to the start of the night's operations.
- 9.30 P.M. Visitors will assemble at the flare-path on the aerodrome to watch the aircraft take-off on the night's operations over GERMANY. The take-off, by single aircraft in turn, will be completed by approximately —.
- 11.00 P.M. Transport will be available to take back to the — Hotel, those visitors who do not wish to wait until the aircraft return from their raid, the first of which is due back at the station at — A.M.
- For those visitors who would like to remain, camp-bed accommodations will be available and they will be called in good time to witness the return of the raiding aircraft. Visitors are also invited to "breakfast" with the returned crews in the mess after their official interrogation has been completed.
- 4.30 A.M. Transportation will be available to take visitors back to their rooms at the — Hotel.

To this program was attached a page of notes about the R.A.F. station:

"The R.A.F. Station, —, is an operational station of the Bomber Command of the Royal Air Force and the home of two long-range heavy bomber squadrons. One of these squadrons, known as the New Zealand Squadron, is manned largely by New Zealanders. Each has to its credit two Distinguished Flying Crosses, and between them, nine Distinguished Flying Medals, won in the course of night flying operations against the enemy.

"Aircraft from this station have been continuously engaged in active service flying since the outbreak of the war. — squadrons were responsible for dropping several millions of leaflets over all parts of GERMANY during the early months of the war. Since then, they have participated in the Norwegian campaign, operating from bases in the British Isles, and in recent months they have been engaged in almost nightly attacks on oil storage plants, aircraft factories, naval dockyards, marshalling yards, munition factories and other military targets throughout GERMANY and the German occupied territories of Europe.

"The aircraft used at — and throughout this group of the R.A.F. Bomber Command are long-range heavy bombers of the Vickers Wellington type. A mid-wing two-motor monoplane, the Wellington has a gross weight of just over 10 tons and can carry a heavy bomb load over a long distance. Powered with two Bristol Pegasus air-cooled radial motors, developing a total of 1,500 h.p., the Wellington has an official top speed of 265 miles per hour.

It can climb to 15,000 feet in 18 minutes and has a service ceiling of over 26,000 feet.

"Normal crews consist of 6 men; pilot, second pilot, navigator and bomb-aimer, wireless operator and two air gunners. The Wellington is well able to defend itself against attacks from enemy fighters, being armed with power-driven gun turrets, fitted with — Browning guns, in nose and tail, and a — gun position amidships. Running the length of the fuselage is a catwalk. The cabin is well lighted by side windows and provided with emergency exits. In addition to an elaborate wireless and D/F installation, the airplane is fitted with an automatic pilot and its equipment includes an inflatable dinghy, landing-lights, and parachute flares. The substantial bomb-load is carried in the hollow underside of the airplane and the bombs are released electrically either in salvo or individually at intervals.

"A distinctive feature of the Wellington Bomber is its geodetic system of construction. This patent method, using curved diagonal members, reconciles great stiffness and strength with very low structural weight. It also permits the construction of wings of high-aspect ratio which make for good take-off climb and a high ceiling. Internal accommodation, however, is much less obstructed than with more conventional methods of construction and the fuselage can withstand greater punishment by gunfire without fatally weakening the structure.

"Wellington Bombers from this group of stations played a prominent part in the first air action of the war, when on September 4, 1939, the R.A.F. made its highly successful daylight attack on the German naval bases at Kiel and Wilhelmshaven."

With these notes the Air Ministry also gave us a printed sheet containing the conditions of censorship and security on which the permits for this visit had been issued (I print them because of their general public interest for Americans):

(1) *Censorship.*

All articles, scripts, etc., written as a result of this visit must be submitted in triplicate for approval to the Air Ministry.

All photographs, sketches, etc., must be submitted for approval to the Air Ministry. Photographs must be submitted in triplicate with captions and should be identified by number.

All film material (including sound commentary) must be submitted for approval to the Air Ministry.

(2) *Security Requirements.*

(i) Information may be published regarding:—

(a) Types, names, general description and performance of aircraft shown for “publication” to permit holders during the visit. (These do not necessarily include all aircraft *seen* during the visit).

(b) Numbers and disposition of the guns on the aircraft shown as in (a) above.

(c) Information may be gathered from personnel and quoted “In the first person” but without mention of names.

(d) Descriptions of the interior or exterior of buildings which do not disclose the system of camouflage or the layout of the buildings or surrounding area.

(ii) Information *must not* be given in articles written, statements broadcast, photographs or cinematograph pictures taken, or otherwise,

which would be a breach of the Air Defence Notices or which would reveal:—

- (a) The name or location of the station.
- (b) The identification of units on the station visited or elsewhere, i.e. the official designation number.
- (c) Information as to the number of aircraft located at the station.
- (d) The method of dispersal of aircraft.
- (e) Details of armament, other than in para. (i) (b) above, or of any other equipment.
- (f) General nature or layout of buildings or surrounding area.
- (g) Nature or description of camouflage employed on the buildings or station.
- (h) Any information as to the Operations Room.
- (i) Names or addresses or “nicknames” of personnel.
- (j) The type, performance or any other matter concerning any aircraft not covered by (i) (a) above.

NOTE

While the above conditions are intended to give general guidance as to the matters likely to arise in connection with the above visit, the Air Ministry reserves the right to withhold approval of the publication of anything which they consider unsuitable for publication.

We drove out from London that morning in a fleet of huge Daimlers. It was a grand morning and farmers were cutting miles of wheatfields; all over that part of England they were gathering in the harvest. The sun was shining

and there were soldiers on the march, all of them in battle dress which the British had borrowed, as they had borrowed the air-raid siren, from Loyalist Spain—the Spain that the Chamberlain government had helped so much to defeat. Those battle uniforms on the roads of Britain always reminded us that Manchuria had been linked to Ethiopia, and that Ethiopia had been linked to Madrid, and Madrid, now, was linked to London. Those who should have stood had not stood, including us in America—only the Chinese and the savage Abyssinians and the Loyalists in Spain had fought, only the weak had had the courage. The rest of us had wanted peace at any price—we had appeased and retreated, and now the British were living to fight on another day. And so would America live to fight. . . .

We talked about all that, driving across England.

Vincent Sheean said: “The most ironical photograph of 1940 is that one of Sir Nevile Henderson being taught by Spanish Loyalists at Austerly Park to throw a hand-grenade.”

We drove rapidly, and everywhere we saw farmers working and soldiers marching. At lunch-time we stopped at a pub and drank beer and ate English sandwiches; then we started on again and on scheduled time reached our hotel, a wonderful rambling place with baths and feather beds and all the quiet and comfort of creation.

And at 6.30 p.m. to the minute, there was the air officer commanding the bomber group and there were his aides with bottles of sherry.

Charming and intelligent, the air vice marshal talked about his men and their ships and about how personal air fighting was and how much of it depended on the confi-

dence men had in one another, in their skill and personal courage. He told us the German searchlights were good and seemingly without number, that the fire of the German ground guns was exceedingly accurate. He told us it was a point of honour among English pilots to report truly about the damage they had done to their targets.

"What is to keep a crew from getting together on their report?" inquired Bill Stoneman of the Chicago *Daily News*. "What is to keep them from being ambitious, from wanting to win the Distinguished Flying Cross?"

"The other men attend to that," said the air marshal, pouring himself a little sherry. "The other men know when men are telling the truth, and if a crew is suspected of adding to itself false laurels—the other men take care of that. They walk up behind the suspected men and quietly whisper into their ears: 'And there they were, flying upside down and all the time rapidly losing altitude. . . .'"

We drove to the mess for dinner.

And there they were—the men who had dropped leaflets over Germany, and who had taken part in the Norwegian campaign, and who had bombed the Rhineland and the Ruhr. There was a big buffet and they helped themselves—the fliers were not rationed, and their meal was good and plentiful and simple: soup, meat, potatoes, lettuce and tomato salad, a fruit pudding, cheese.

It was a quiet, exciting place. The fliers who were scheduled to fly over Germany that night came into the mess early and kept to themselves; they made their way to the far end of the big room and ate together; they were cheerful and subdued, and it was evident to everyone that they wanted to be alone, they were under a tension. The men who were not flying that night did not approach

them. Already the fliers who were to carry out the night's raid had received their orders—they had discussed weather conditions and they had studied air charts of the Rhineland with their commanding officer. They knew this officer well and he knew them well individually—they called him "Father." The crews knew what was expected of them—what primary targets they were supposed to hit, what secondary targets, what targets of last resort. So over in the far corner they sat down to the hot soup and the roast beef. They ate lightly and in silence; then they left the messroom to put on their flying clothes.

When we had eaten, we went outside, and as night settled down, we went over to the hangars. Soon a signal came through—it was time for the raid to start. And out from the dressing-rooms came the crews, looking like bears in heavy fleece-lined coats and warm pants and flying boots. Europe is a far-northern continent and even with the Gulf Stream it is a cold region; even in August there are icing conditions over the North Sea. Trucks were waiting, and the fliers jumped into these to be carried off into the darkness to their ships in the fields.

It was a moving scene. The mechanics shook hands with the pilots, they patted them on the shoulders. As the truck-drivers began to shift gears and move away, all the ground crews came rushing out from the hangars to shout good-bye. They did not mention good luck, as there was a superstition about saying that at this station. But in the dimness we could see the ground men holding their thumbs up—the salute which the British among themselves have adopted for this war. The men on the ground held up their thumbs and the fliers on the trucks responded.

Soon the flare path was lighted—a dim line of lights began to burn from one end of the airdrome to the other; it would give the men in the heavily loaded bombers their direction and it would be all they would have to guide them as they took off into the night. We could hear the motors tuning up, the sound of voices. We watched the boys climbing into a plane that was near us—saw them settling themselves, making certain that everything was all right; I saw a pilot run his hands over the instrument board as a pianist runs his over the keys of a piano. We walked back to the sidelines. The first plane moved up, skirted for position—a sort of huge grasshopper outlined against the sky. Then its engines roared and it took off, it sped through the darkness down the dim-lit flare path, then it rose, soaring with its six men and its bombs into the English starlight. The second plane came up to the starting-place and followed; then came the third. One followed another. Already overhead the first ships were flashing their signal lights hard, waiting to get the go signal. Finally the entire squadron was in the air, wheeling, flashing signals; the ground gave them the go-ahead and they circled higher and higher and started off like birds into the east.

It made my knees feel shaky and my stomach a little qualmy. They were going off to fight as men fought in the Crusades—to individual battle. They were going to be shot at, deliberately to seek an objective in the heart of the enemy country. They knew what might and what could happen. I thought of the fears I had had just flying from Portugal to England; how I had felt, skirting the farthest edge of the war. I had not wanted to be shot down, and I was ten years older than these boys—they had ten reasons more than I to wish to keep on living.

Duty becomes a living word to you at an airdrome in a war.

We were left in a field of stillness. There were ordinary sounds—dogs barking at distant farmhouses, a night bird crying; there were stars but no moon, and over the whole of England there was nothing now but blackout. We returned to the officers' mess to wait.

Young airmen told us how Hamburg looked at night, how it felt to fly over Bremen; they told us from what height they were bombing Ruhr factories. They told us about the feeling it gave them to drop bombs on Nazi targets, to know they were destroying something being used by Hitler. They talked about flying—about conferring with one another before approaching enemy country, each man being given a hearing, then sizing up the situation. We stopped talking about the war.

We smoked, drank beer. Midnight arrived. One o'clock. Two o'clock. We sat in a comfortable room, in leather chairs—we were waiting while men we had eaten supper with were risking their lives over the Rhineland. Some of us got away from the British—we wanted to talk among ourselves. Our country was still at peace; we still had a peacetime attitude toward life and death. Individual lives could not count to a nation at war, the English had to consider this raid as something national; but to us, to Americans, it was a group of individuals who were making this raid, a group of individuals who might lose their lives. "Let's don't talk any more," said Bill Stoneman.

An officer, coming in, told us the men were on their way home now—would we like to go to the operations room to hear them communicating with the base? Soon we were listening to the crews in the air talking to the

ground, to the boys in the ships seeking advice from the man they called "Father." This made the war seem to us even more personal. The boys in the air were asking about weather conditions, about wind velocity. We listened to the station commander answering their questions, in a steady voice filled with strength and quiet, the kind of voice that would give anybody confidence if he were depending on it for his safety.

The first planes appeared overhead, and we went out into the night to watch. Just as the first plane was ready to land, the wind shifted suddenly, moving into an entirely new quadrant, and all planes had to be wirelessly to stay in the air until the flare path could be shifted. The planes signalled back O.K.—we often heard that American term in use—O.K. They circled the field in enormous circles, and while they were in the midst of this manoeuvre there was a purple alarm—enemy ships were near. The flare path was darkened, the tenseness of the men on the ground became more obvious. The ships in the air continued to wheel. Then came a yellow signal—the Germans had gone on. The field was flooded with light for one moment to enable the planes to judge their position, then the ships started coming down. One after another they arrived, all except the ship whose number was "P"—"P" for "Percy." Soon "P" for "Percy" came over and landed too; the men had returned.

The boys changed clothes, washed up, and at four o'clock in the morning sat down with us for a breakfast of ham and eggs. The weather had been bad, they said; they talked about the places they had been to—Cologne, Texel airdrome, Wesel, Schipol, and others. One boy told of having seen three fighters starting for his ship; he and his crew had shirred off, another had been shot

at, tracer bullets had whizzed by. At my table there was a New Zealander with the ribbons of the Flying Cross on his jacket. I asked him who various boys were. One at the foot of the table opposite us had a sensitive, intellectual look. "Who's he?" "A rear runner," said the New Zealander. "He looks like a poet," I said. Laughing, the New Zealander answered: "Oh, he's not a poet—we've only one poet and he doesn't look like one." Another New Zealander came in and sat down at our table and we began to talk about the curving railroad that runs along the hills from Auckland to Rotorua, about fishing in Lake Taupo, about the glow-worms in the grotto at Waitomo.

After we had eaten breakfast, we went into the lounge room where we had waited while these fliers were in the air. The New Zealander with the ribbons of the Flying Cross turned on the radio, dialling until he got the Wellington short-wave station. An orchestra was playing in New Zealand, twelve thousand miles from us. And that raid was over.

Next morning we drove back to London. I wrote my story, submitted it in triplicate to the Air Ministry at Whitehall, and soon had it on the cables to *PM* in New York. I had no trouble about that story with the official censor.

I slept that afternoon, and that night I went to see *Thunder Rock*, a curious play that had flopped in New York but in London had become a sensation. It was an American play, about a lighthouse-keeper on Lake Michigan who got to thinking about the people who had gone down on a ship off his light in 1848. During long, lonely days and nights the keeper re-created these people—they were immigrants who had fled from Europe and they

were discouraged; they had no faith left—they believed the world was faced with disruption. Suddenly the keeper made the passengers a passionate speech, urging them to hold on—he told them at that very moment in Illinois there was a young man named Abraham Lincoln, that Madame Curie had been born and Florence Nightingale was alive, that Pasteur was in Paris. . . . London people went to that show, night after night, and wept. It was a play for a city that had prepared itself to die.

August had come now, and I bought some tannic jelly, that you rub on your hands if you have been exposed to mustard gas; I bought a pair of stout shoes. Ambassador Kennedy lent me a United States Army gas mask. I had done everything I could do.

August brought the battle.



CHAPTER VII

There never in the history of the world was such an August as that August at Dover. The Germans tried with raids in the daytime to smash England, and the British fought them and turned them back in the Kentish sky. Nothing happening anywhere else in the world could even approach those battles in importance, so the correspondents left London for Dover.

We got to know that road well during the next thirty days—sometimes we would drive back and forth, taking the Old Kent Road by Canterbury, sometimes going by Folkestone; sometimes we would go by train, at first by Seven Oaks, later by Canterbury after the Germans had bombed the tracks on the Folkestone line.

One morning early in the month Helen Kirkpatrick of the Chicago *Daily News* phoned me that we ought to get to Dover and get there immediately. I agreed, so we phoned Bob Casey of the Chicago *Daily News*, David K. E. Bruce of the American Red Cross, and Vincent Sheean to come along with us. We were taking a chance, we knew, deliberately travelling into the battle zone; but we took our work seriously and we knew it was important to

the readers at home to have as much information as possible about what was going on. The future of the United States as well as England's future was to be decided by the fights in those skies. Ambassador Kennedy telephoned when he heard we were going; he wanted to know what hotel we planned to stop at, how long we intended to stay; he said he felt personally responsible for our safety, told us to take no more chances than we had to.

Another American, a journalist, went with us—I won't mention his name for he got himself into trouble and nearly got us into trouble also. He sat at Dover, with France in sight, and told English soldiers and sailors that the English were a lousy people and that he could take Dover himself in a couple of hours. The English restrained themselves with good manners from knocking him on the jaw, and he so little understood this restraint that he afterwards said to Jimmy Sheean: "I wouldn't be allowed to talk to American officers like that—they'd knock the —— out of me."

Dover was a military area, heavily guarded, and we had to report to Marshal Bolt, the Chief Constable, and to the military and to the naval security police on our arrival. The military police never bothered us, but the naval intelligence officer tried at first to keep us from talking to English officers at the hotel. It was his own idea, and his tactics were to invite us to dinner and then to serve us drinks until one or two in the morning—he tried to keep us entertained. We put up with that for two or three evenings, and after that we told the officer we were engaged, we were sorry. He then insisted on hospitality and we ignored him. We had no real difficulty with the English intelligence in that area. Once we had reported to them, we were free.

Marshal Bolt took us that first afternoon to see the shelters that Dover had equipped in the twelfth-century tunnels in the chalk cliffs. They were far below the ground, safe from any bomb, and had electric lights and beach chairs. You had to take a coat with you, though, as the temperature of the tunnels was ideal for mushrooms, about forty-eight degrees. One of these caves had an emergency hospital with hot water and an operating-table, and another had been turned into a morgue—they could store bodies. Marshal Bolt told us the tunnels had been used in A.D. 1100. "What do you think of progress?" he asked us, with more sadness than sarcasm.

There were clouds that day and a wind in from the North Sea, with the English Channel choppy, and as evening came on, the weather got worse—there were no Germans. That evening we had dinner with the naval intelligence officer—we were talked to until midnight. Next morning we were up early and off to Shakespeare Cliff, a promontory a mile west of Dover, a superb place from which to watch battles. The English country stretched off behind us, and there lay Dover and Dover Castle above it, and there was the Channel, and France beyond.

This was a fine August day and there were flocks of seagulls about and swarms of white butterflies—a sign, according to an old-timer, that the winter would be hard. Red currants were ripening in the gardens along the path that led up the cliffside, Irish potatoes were growing, and the wheat in the fields was ready for reaping. The day was as quiet as any summer day in America—as any summer day safe in far-away Montana or Missouri—you could hear bees buzzing. Then the sirens started. Off they went, and then we heard the droning of German planes and the steady sound of British planes coming out to meet

them. The Germans were flying very high, perhaps five miles up, and we could not see them for a high dust-like haze. They whirled above us and whirred, many of them in formations, and then, when they sounded exactly over us, we heard the burst of machine-guns and the light sound of airplane cannon. The noise of the battle taking place in the space above us sounded like thunder—it had that distant rumble. We heard planes diving, the increased speed roaring into sound. The Germans and the British flew off, and over us again, and off, and through it all we crouched in a ditch and listened.

Behind us, several miles away, we heard the heavy thud of bombs exploding; then the chase was on again. The Germans came over us and one plane, Germany-bound, flew low over Dover, shooting at the balloons above the city. A heavy burst of anti-aircraft fire opened up from the ground, but the plane escaped. Shells from these ground guns burst high in the air—puffs of smoke in space. Soon a flight of Germans came racing toward home with a flight of Englishmen behind them. There was a burst of fire and we saw a German plane fall like a bullet straight into the sea. For some German boy that was the end of his tour of duty. The others in his squadron sped on to France. That fight lasted two hours, from start to finish. Then the all-clear sounded, that clear, sweet note, echoing over the hillsides and the sea and the city, and we were left as we had been before the fight started—listening to bees buzzing, with the sun shining and gulls soaring. That was the sensation we were never to overcome during those days at Dover in August—how we could be in the midst of life one moment, in death another.

An hour later, there again was the sound of the sirens.

There was another raid, and this time we could see the Germans coming, high in the air, caught in the glint of the sunshine like birds in motion. Over all that part of England the guns from the ground began firing. Again the British came forward, again the Germans retreated. That raid lasted an hour.

There was a third fight that day, a fourth one just before sundown. At dusk we went back into Dover, tired and excited, but sure that we could get our stories written and filed in quiet—the Germans at that time had not turned to flying at night. We lived on our nerves during the daytime in August; at night we more or less got some rest.

The next day was tremendous. We got up very early, and as the day was perfect, we decided to walk to the cliff rather than to call a taxi. It was early August, but England, as I have said, is a northern country and there was a feel of autumn in the air—the kind of rich quiet fullness that we know in late September in the United States. We had been on the road about ten minutes and had reached a pub called the King Lear when we heard the Germans coming. Looking up four miles, we saw them—a squadron of Germans flying in formation—three, three, three, and one. On they came in perfect pattern; then they swept down, diving, losing their shining gleam as they dropped into the lower light. They swept low on the next town, on Folkestone—that was the Folkestone raid. We heard the heavy thud of bombs exploding, shaking the earth, and we heard the guns rumbling and saw some of the enemy planes wheel away and start off again toward France. One of the Germans, however, turned

back in our direction and, with a trail of white smoke behind, made for the balloon that guarded our cliff, the balloon that we called King Lear. He came very low, flying in a hail of flaming onions shot at him by British Bofurs. The German missed King Lear, and the British gunners missed the German, but the German strafed our road with machine-gun bullets as he fled. We heard bullets whizzing about us and took cover in the pub.

We climbed the cliff and soon heard another wave of Germans approaching, all flying very high. We knew they were in great numbers this time, for already we had memorized the volumes of sound. Suddenly an enormous barrage went up from the English guns, the cliff shook, and then we heard the sound of a terrific battle taking place perhaps five miles up in the sky. Planes roared over two hundred square miles, firing bursts of cannon and machine-gun bullets. Quickly planes moved almost out of hearing, leaving us again momentarily with the buzzing bees and the crickets. Then the battle moved toward us again, the planes flying directly overhead and sending us into a ditch under a piece of sheet iron while shrapnel fell about us. We could hear the swosh of shells in the air and then the whole of England began to quake as the anti-aircraft guns put up a heavy barrage over Dover. A full squadron of German planes flew low, heading for the balloons. They got two, the balloons burst into crimson flame; but down with the balloons came a German plane, falling like a leaf and breaking in mid-air into pieces. Soon another German plane fell into the sea, and as it came down, we saw the pilot bailing out. His parachute did not open. Planes roared on. This kind of fighting kept on for nearly an hour, other squadrons taking part, and then we were left again to our silence.

We pulled weeds in a potato patch belonging to Paddy, an Irish shantyman, who somehow at the end of his life now found himself settled on this cliff at Dover. We lay in the grass among the red currants and the butterflies while the fate of the world was being decided about us. We had company that morning—Prince Bernhard of the Netherlands came by the cliff with Penelope Aitkin, daughter of the British representative at Dublin and niece-in-law of Lord Beaverbrook. With Penelope and the Prince, who had a stronger face than his pictures gave him, was Norman Griggs, an American with the Red Cross in London. Norman had a button in his lapel: "Willkie for President." We cabled that bit of news home along with the news of that day's battle, and weeks later Norman received a mild reprimand from Red Cross headquarters far off in Washington. (We decided a Democrat must have read our dispatches.)

Before long the battle resumed in our vicinity and we watched and listened until it too had passed. A dud shell fell on the hill opposite us and terrified a goat. We saw some Germans and some British shot into the sea. Just before noon the all-clear sounded and we went into Dover to eat, then returned and watched battles throughout the afternoon. Late in the afternoon we saw a German plane make a question-mark in smoke over Ramsgate—they bombed it again a few days later. After that we drove to Folkestone to see for ourselves what damage the Nazis had done. We found houses smashed, one very large house almost demolished—it had that desolate look which bombed places always assume; there were curtains hanging across roomless windows, pictures left on a wall. A man said to us, pointing to the house: "They were my neighbours." Considerable damage had been done from

a humanitarian standpoint, but militarily the destruction meant nothing. Of the town's forty thousand people, thirty-nine thousand five hundred had survived.

No journalist could stay away from Dover after he had sat all day on Shakespeare Cliff and watched those battles. Nowhere in England could the fighting be observed with such detachment and perspective. We could see the raids start, see them fought and ended, and we could get some idea of their general aspect, of how their tactics changed from day to day. The cliff was almost a stage-setting, so perfect was it as an observation point, and as a result the press of the whole democratic world gathered on it.

Those were wonderful days in every way—they changed me as an individual. I lost my sense of personal fear because I saw that what happened to me did not matter. We counted as individuals only as we took our place in the procession of history. It was not we who counted, it was what we stood for. And I knew now for what I was standing—I was for freedom. It was as simple as that. I realized the good that often can come from death. We were where we were and we had what we had because a whole line of our people had been willing to die. I understood Valley Forge and Gettysburg at Dover, and I found it lifted a tremendous weight off your spirit to find yourself willing to give up your life if you have to—I discovered Saint Matthew's meaning about losing a life to find it. I don't see now why I ever again should be afraid.

We did a lot of serious talking on the cliff as we waited

through the lulls. We thought a good deal about Rome with the Vandals and the Goths threatening invasion—it must not have been so easy as it seemed in the pages of Gibbon; history was not that glib, not that beautiful and smooth and flowing. Gibbon had left out the tears and the personal courage. We talked about Napoleon and the speeches of Pitt. It was across this Channel that Napoleon had planned his invasion—within sight of us were the round stone Martello towers, still standing, which the British a hundred years before had built to defend England against the Emperor of the French. On the cliff in those days watchers lit beacons as a warning to the countryside to get ready. Now anyone who showed any kind of light at night would be fined and liable to imprisonment. An electric siren warned Dover today—a mechanical machine that also warned Berlin and Naples and Jerusalem and Chungking in China. Jimmy Sheean said: “We’ll see the time come when it will warn Baltimore and Washington.” Jimmy was more bitter than some of the rest of us—he had seen more, had more to forget.

We talked about the airplane, which for so many years was touted as an invention of progress—all those early air flights throughout the world, how they were to bring nations closer together, to get people to know one another, to bring peace.

We talked about Dover. Dover was primarily a fishing town, and like the landowners in Scotland and South Carolina the fishermen had resisted the machine way of living. They were called reactionary in other parts of England, and in a certain sense so they were—the machine was inevitable, it was progress, its period of ruthlessness in the end would be turned to the people’s good. But in continuing to live simply, they had kept a quality

of old-time courage. War was the heritage of Dover and the Cinque Ports, they had told us, and they had not tried to escape war. They had never tried to escape—they had learned that from living off the sea. While the men patrolled the Channel at night during this war, their families were walking the hills, watching for parachutes. Even the blind were working—they had discovered they could hear better because they could not see. They were a great people along the Kent coast and we were glad to have found them—we had not read about them in English novels nor had we ever met them during our tours of Britain in peace.

We had wonderful company on the cliff. Art Menken was there with his camera set, always ready to begin grinding away film, always ready to talk about the thread that ran from the China wars to this one. Art had been in China, in Finland; so had Ed Beattie—red-headed Ed, who had been at Hotchkiss and Yale and in Ethiopia and the Balkans as well as in China and Finland. And there were Helen Kirkpatrick and Virginia Cowles, two extraordinary American girls, and there was Hilde Marchant, an English girl from Hull—daughter of a butcher, and equally brilliant. Helen had a first-class mind and she used it; already she had become one of the best American journalists, woman or man, and in the weeks that were to follow she was to add to her already established reputation. Helen was born in one of the cities in upstate New York, was reared in West Virginia, educated at Smith College, and before joining the *Chicago Daily News* in London had worked with Governor Winant of New Hampshire in the Labour Bureau at Geneva. Helen was tall and beautiful and believed in taking up matters with people at the top, with cabinet ministers and the

like. Helen was a first-class professional journalist, Virginia a first-class amateur. Virginia was a Bostonian who had come to London from the wars in Spain. She did a weekly column for the London *Sunday Times*, sometimes wrote for the North American Newspaper Alliance, and like Art and Ed and Hilde she had been in Finland. But unlike them she very often refused to cover a story. Virginia knew practically everybody in London, including the King and Queen and the Churchills. She knew so many people so well and they told her so much that Virginia sometimes felt she was not justified in putting what she knew into next Sunday's print.

Hilde Marchant of the London *Daily Express* was the best woman journalist in England, and she had got where she was by ability. Tiny, a sort of Spitfire attached to the ground, Hilde was passionate in her belief in the common people. She had been at Berchtesgaden and at Munich, but she never had accepted Chamberlain as England—England to her was the miners in Wales and the ship-workers on the Clydeside and the fishermen at Hull and at Dover. She wanted them to have a better life, wanted more education for their children. She wrote well, but even better than her writing was her talk. And nothing shattered her, she would not allow herself to be shattered—one day I heard her refuse to go with the Baroness Moira Budberg to have supper with H. G. Wells on the ground that she thought so much of Wells she did not wish to meet him—he could not possibly live up to her own mental picture. She told Moira to ask her again ten years from now.

Ed Murrow was on the cliff and sometimes Knickerbocker and sometimes David Bruce, and always there was Vincent Sheean.

David and I would talk about the South, about its problems and its progress and about our duty to it, about settling there as soon as the chance offered and working for it; all Southerners ought to help. I remember one afternoon when the sea was a lovely crystal glittering blue and the sky was blue with banks of enormous cumulus clouds, David and I sat on the cliff between two battles and talked through an afternoon about Lee and Jeb Stuart and Jackson, about the War between the States.

One afternoon Ed Murrow told us that some time he wished he had never gone to college—if he had never worked for a half-baked education he still would be a lumberjack in the State of Washington; there was a satisfaction about that life; he said he had never known that kind of satisfaction since. Ed would talk about the world in a shrewd, critical, and yet understanding way—we got from him free the kind of observations that the Columbia Broadcasting Company paid him to send home on the air. And sometimes he would give us free lessons in radio diction—he would tell us where to pause and what words to accent in a sentence.

Ed and I were friends of Jimmy Sheean. Jimmy was tormented by the world's troubles. History to him truly was personal, and as I got to understand him more I was astonished to learn how much of himself he had succeeded in getting into the pages of *Personal History*. Very often he would get discouraged. One morning at Dover in the middle of a battle he looked out a window and saw a squad of boys in the balloon outfit firing at a German plane with a rifle. Bitterly Jimmy said: "Ever since the Riff war my side has been firing at airplanes with rifles." Jimmy was simple and he was very kind to young journalists just starting, but he also had got rich.

He spent huge sums of money—money was something he had, he never thought of it as capital. He was indifferent to money, and yet he seemed to enjoy rich living.

Sometimes Ed and I would attack him for spending so much of his time with aristocratic people and yet at the same time worrying so much about the poor. On those occasions patient Jimmy would get furious. One night in London when the three of us were dining with Judith Listowel, Ed and I began again the same old attack, and Jimmy this time could not stand it any longer—he was angry. Judith said: “Americans make me feel a hundred years old—sometimes when I’m with Americans I feel as old as Europe. Americans are so young.”



CHAPTER VIII

We were in and out of the Grand Hotel at Dover throughout the month of August. Frequently some of us would have to go back the ninety miles to London for a day or so, as we had various personal business there, and occasionally we went all the way to London in order to file a story if it was a particularly long one. We always had difficulty getting our news out of Dover—mechanical difficulty, as the telegraph and telephone services were all but totally commandeered by the army, the Royal Air Force, and the navy. They had priority, and quite often we had to spend hours waiting our turn on the London phone.

We got to be very much at home both at the Grand Hotel and in Dover before that month was finished. We would go to visit the red-haired woman who ran the pub in the square where David Copperfield waited for his aunt. She would talk and we would listen; in the midst of battles overhead, she would pour out beer and click a pair of knitting-needles. We got accustomed, as she already had, to living on a battlefield. At the hotel we even

got so we could sleep through raids with the guns going and the planes roaring—we got accustomed to everything except the spasmodic shelling from the coast of France. Always there was something more alarming about shells than bombs—a lateral threat was more terrifying than one that came straight down. Probably it was because a bomb covered less territory than a shell—it was easier to hide from. One morning a machine-gun bullet ricocheted from the pavement and landed in a bucket of potatoes in the hotel kitchen—into a bucket which the cook was holding in her lap. Another bullet came into the dining-room on another morning at breakfast, and one of the English journalists found a piece of shrapnel once in his plate of soup. A dud of a shell came through the hotel coping. The hotel was as flimsy almost as paper and we always had a feeling that sooner or later it would be laid low, but somehow we did not think it was threatened just at the moment. That was the peculiar aspect of those early raids over Dover—the Germans fought the British and they assaulted the balloon barrage, but they seldom dropped bombs at that time on the town. Sometimes we would lie in bed and hear bullets raining on the roof, sometimes we would lean out the window to watch the fighting—sometimes we would be taking baths in the course of battles.

The town of Dover was crowded with soldiers, airmen, sailors, and war correspondents. Practically every bed was taken and most of the hotels, except the Grand and a place called the Shalimar, had been commandeered by the government. We gradually converged on the Grand, as the Shalimar was a temperance hotel, and we finally boycotted the Shalimar altogether after the management one night had ousted Ed Beattie and two military at-

tachées from the American Embassy in London for singing songs on a balcony after eleven o'clock.

The Grand before the war had been a good second-class establishment in a town where clerks spent holidays in the summer. It had had rules and had stuck to them, and it had a manager who still followed rules—war or no war; he made no concessions. All his life he had been accustomed to regularity and here he had thrust upon him some of the most irregular people in existence—dozens of London and foreign journalists, soldiers and seamen, many of whom worked round the clock. He had men off the trawlers who worked at night, sweeping the Channel of mines—they slept by day; he had men from the guns who kept watch at night. Still, the manager did his best—breakfast was served from seven thirty to nine. Exactly at ten in the morning the doors to the dining-room closed, exactly at nine in the evening they closed again, and nothing could get them open. His attitude to all his customers was that the guests were always wrong, and he paid them as little attention as possible. Guests were nuisances that had to be tolerated—what interested him was the hotel, the building itself, and order. He was like a librarian who has become so infatuated by the sight of books that he does not want readers to disturb them.

The manager of the Grand was unmoved by the battles. I saw him adding accounts when bedlam itself was breaking loose—when the air outside was filled with bursts of white smoke, with shells exploding, with guns going and planes flying and the earth quaking, rattling the window-panes in every room in the Grand.

The Grand had bathrooms at the end of halls, an elevator that worked sometimes and sometimes didn't;

there were potted palms in the parlour; and the food was terrible, and little of it at that. We often complained about the food, but it did no good—the manager always answered us with “Don’t you know there’s a war?” It made no difference to him whether we ate at the hotel or not—our bill included board. Very often we didn’t eat there. Very often we ate in the basement of a place called the Crypt or we drove out on the road toward Folkestone to the High Hope or the Valiant Sailor—we liked the names of those pubs.

The Grand had a head waiter, George, who was more of a tyrant than the manager; he insisted that we eat at the same table day after day and that we keep the same napkin. George was interested in cross-Channel swimming; he had known every person who for the last forty years had tried the Channel swim. Often he would say to us that if Adolf Hitler really meant to invade England he had better get Gertrude Ederle on his staff.

Our best friend at the Grand was Josephine, the barmaid. She was an attractive, interesting girl. She had personal courage and she never for one minute lost interest in the fights. If it was after hours, Jo would spend most of her time at the hotel doorway, looking out. One day when all hell had been let loose, I saw Jo—a copy of *The Grapes of Wrath* under one arm—shouting to the gunners on the beach: “Go to it, Bofurs.”

Day after day the battles were fought on almost clock schedule. The Germans in their methodical way would come over at seven thirty, nine thirty, noon, three thirty and seven thirty. Frequently the British would meet them over the English Channel, but toward the end of

the month they did not attack the enemy until they were almost on the outskirts of London. We were told the British had concentrated their fighting forces about the capital, expecting a terrific blow. Often we felt that something had happened to numbers of German planes—frequently we did not see as many returning as we had seen coming over; either they had gone home another way, as was possible, or they had been shot down. Several times we saw planes falling so close to us that we could tell ourselves whether they were German or British, and on several occasions we saw three German planes coming down to one British, five German to two British, two German to one British. As early as the 15th of August, when the British won their first major air battle over England, we at Dover had begun to believe the British communiqués.

We realized by that time too that the British were winning, they were holding back the attacks by day, they were holding the air over England—holding it so successfully that, with the exception of one raid over Dover, one over Ramsgate, and one over Folkestone, the Germans had not dive-bombed in Britain. The British pilots were outnumbered, one to ten and sometimes one to twenty, but they were holding their own. It was true that so few were doing so much for so many. Sometimes the British pilots went up six and seven times in a single day.

Those boys at that time had little rest and almost no time for anything besides fighting, but occasionally a few of them would come to the Grand Hotel for a few minutes in the evening—usually to see Virginia Cowles. And the rest of us would talk to them. They would tell us about the sky end of what we had seen from the ground.

They were serious young men, very sober, very conscious that England itself was at stake. They did not take themselves seriously, however, and they liked flying—it thrilled them, they said, to be alone in the air, flying and fighting. They did not think personally when they saw a German plane falling—it was a ship that was going down, not a German. When they thought personally was before that—it was an Englishman against a German during the time each was shooting. Some of them estimated that a pilot was lucky, more or less, during his first three fights, but that after three fights a pilot had acquired a world of practical knowledge. They were rather superstitious about shooting down more than twelve enemy planes—there was a belief among them that after twelve the law of averages began to operate against them. They did not mind seeing their friends go, they said, so long as they stayed at the station and kept on going up and up—they could adjust themselves to that. But it was hard on them to go away for a while and then come back. That was why they liked to stay where they were, to stick to the squadron. They were cheerful. They would drink a glass of beer and then head back for the airdrome. “Take care of yourselves,” they would jeer at us. “Be careful.”

At night we would go out to the beach to watch fires which British bombs had started in the towns of occupied France. There would be miles of glow and we would hear the sound of anti-aircraft guns being fired by the Germans. We could see flares in the French sky, could see the Germans shooting flaming onions—crimson balls of fire. It would make us think of fireworks at Palisades Park in New Jersey and at the World’s Fair on Long Island, and it made us do a lot of thinking about

the United States and our policy of isolation. We would ask ourselves what was to keep us from standing behind barbed wire on the coast of Massachusetts. We knew without telling one another. What force had always stood between American security and the rest of the world? What would happen to America once that force was superseded by another force? We could feel the world shrinking, looking at France across the English Channel—a three-minute channel in 1940. We could feel the Atlantic dwindling, and those were no make-believe fireworks in the Calais sky.

The nights were fine and the sea was still, and the days followed the nights—great summer days right on through the month; the most wonderful summer continued. And there was battle after battle, day after day.

I remember being waked up one morning by the planes and guns; I remember putting on a steel helmet and, in pyjamas, watching a battle from a window at the Grand. High in the bright August sky enemy planes were flying, moving in from the Channel. Soon the air was filled with shells from the shore, and then there was the loudest noise I had ever heard—the British were firing for the first time the ten-dollar box—the Chicago piano. The Germans afterwards referred to this new weapon as a British toy, and I yet don't know how effective it proved to be, but I do know it made an enormous sound. All about the harbour shells went up, and a few seconds later they burst in the air. Each shell had contained a parachute which opened. Soon there were second explosions and wires began to dangle from the parachutes—wires that would entangle German planes. Soon the guns behind the town and on the beaches began to roar, the whole southeast of England began to

tremble and the hotel quivered. Planes began to dive and there was the sound of machine-gunning. The planes moved south, so high they could hardly be seen, they were like the white birds you see in far-off parts of the Pacific Ocean, like the white birds you see off Pitcairn. There were twenty-four Germans in that squadron, and very likely there were another twenty-four above those, and still another twenty-four above those. A plane was coming down, diving straight down, and from out of it came a small parachute—a German was bailing out. The battle moved south along the coast and the Dover batteries stopped firing; the Folkestone guns had taken up the barrage. The parachute was descending, very slowly, and from Dover harbour two fast torpedo boats started off—it was obvious the German would not be able to make a landfall, he would be obliged to come down at sea. The battle moved off, then in a quarter of an hour it returned. A bomb had been dropped over on the ridge. A German plane shot down a Dover balloon. Another German plane had become entangled in a balloon cable; it too was falling. Again the air was filled with bursting shells. I watched and listened and I remember thinking it was a fine summer day and men were dying. I remember asking, too, so long as England could put pilots in the sky, how could an air fleet ever conquer England?

And I remember another day in particular—it was one of the greatest and most terrible of them all. I think it was August 27, a day of victories for the British. The battles that day were fought over the entire southeast of England, all the way from the Thames Estuary to Dover and above the English Channel to Boulogne and Calais. The fights over Dover were at terrific heights,

often nearly six miles high, in the stratosphere and in sub-zero weather. Instead of sending over huge formations of bombers accompanied by great fighter convoys as they had done until this time, the Germans on this day sent over numerous independent groups of ships, striking with them here, there, and everywhere. These numerous, almost continuous flights came over mainly in three waves. The fighting continued almost all day and we saw five planes crash and heard two others crash behind a hill—we could not see them, but we saw their pilots descending with parachutes. We saw two Dover balloons shot down and heard the sound of bombs falling inland in England and the sound of more bombs falling on France. We saw the motor torpedo boats rush out after pilots who had come down in the Channel, and we heard the butt ends of two Messerschmitt cannon shells drop on the hill behind us.

The first wave of this battle began early in the crisp August sky and took place between a bank of light cirrus clouds, very high, and a lower bank of scattered cumulus clouds. The stratosphere was so cold that every movement of the ships was marked by trailing vapours which turned the sky into a scene of mad sky-writing. The sky was marked as ice is by skaters. During the second stage of the fight we saw a German parachutist take twelve minutes to land—we timed him; we saw an English airman take fifteen minutes to descend. Those minutes, pilots had told us, seemed like hundreds of years. The men swing violently from side to side in the air, and usually before they land have become very airsick. We saw an English Spitfire fly slowly in rings about the English airman, following him down and down, protecting him from being machine-gunned by the Germans.

That was a long, terrifying day, with the Germans strafing our cliff with bullets, aiming not at us so much as at King Lear, the balloon on our hill. At the end of that day I remember Art Menken saying: "I wish I were home—I'd like to be in Baltimore, eating oyster stew."

The heavy sad feeling of autumn was gathering about Dover. The grasshoppers had joined the crickets, the butterflies had gone, and the shantyman dug his potatoes. He was killed some time in September—the Germans dropped a bomb on our hill.

One Saturday afternoon during a lull we went down to the King Lear pub to play darts. The woman at the bar was angry because the raid warning had been on ever since noon and she had been unable to get into Dover to buy a leg of lamb for Sunday dinner and get her hair fixed at the beauty parlour. She was annoyed too because the Germans had shot down "our balloon," the big bag above the cliff, five times that day. "Blarst Jerry!" she said. "We put up our decorations and they shoot them down."

A farmer, coming in for a half-pint of ale, showed us a bullet that had ricocheted into his bedroom and had landed on his bed; it was a machine-gun bullet, with an extension, at the butt, containing a bit of inflammable oil. While we were in the middle of the dart game, Frank Butler of the London *Daily Express* came hurrying in with word that a convoy was coming, so we all dashed off to St. Margaret's Bay, above Dover, to wait. There were nearly twenty of us in all, including Helen Kirkpatrick and Hilde Marchant, and our appearance in a fleet of cars aroused the suspicion of the men on watch

at one of the searchlight batteries. Soon a detachment of soldiers came over and ordered us to show our credentials. We got them out and the men looked at them a long time, then said to us: "We thought maybe you were parachutists." "Who did you think the girls were?" Frank Butler asked them. "We weren't taking any chances—they may come over as girls—as school-teachers, Salvation Army lassies; for all we know, they may come over as war correspondents."

There was a fine crimson sunset and then as dusk settled we saw the convoy coming—a long line of British ships, travelling slowly toward us, several planes escorting them, several destroyers acting as guard. On they came and we waited for the German guns in France to begin shelling them, but for some reason the Germans did not attack this convoy; they let it sail.

Then came a still night—and that night we heard bugles blowing at midnight. We were in the parlour at the Grand among the potted palms, talking, and for a few seconds we paid no attention; then instantly all of us realized what was happening. Up at the Castle on the hill and along the hills behind Dover and up and down the beaches bugles were blowing—it was the invasion alarm. The Germans were coming.

We hurried into the dark street. Trucks began moving back and forth, cars dashed by in the darkness. Josephine, the barmaid, said: "Just let them try." The wife of one of the London journalists darted into the hotel and two minutes later came out again with a suitcase—she was ready to hike to London, the only person I know anything about who was ready to run away. Everybody else went down to the beach. The bugles continued—a weird sound in the starlight. Some of the

townspeople joined us and we waited. The troops would not let us cross the promenade.

There was no wind that night, the sea was calm—a perfect night for the Germans. We waited and waited, but nothing happened. We did not know until hours later what had been going on. A strange formation of fog had been sighted off Portsmouth. The atmospheric conditions had not seemed to be fog-forming in the least that night, so, taking no chances, the Admiralty had ordered the alarm for the entire south coast of England. And that was one story we were not allowed to send out—it was censored.

One day toward the end of August we got news in Dover that the sirens had sounded at last in London. We heard that London had had a raid lasting several hours, and as always, unless we were on the spot, we could not tell fact from rumour. Dover had heard that London had had a hard time, and everyone in Dover was worried. The next morning we left for London, and it so happened that after that few of us got back to the Kentish coast—the Germans had altered their tactics, the main battle had shifted.

A few days after our departure, during a skirmish, the Germans dropped a bomb on the Grand Hotel, demolishing half of it entirely. The manager and George, the waiter, and Josephine escaped, but others were not so lucky. We heard that the manager blamed Hilde Marchant for the bombing; it was said he believed the Germans had read what Hilde had written about the Grand in the *Daily Express*.

CHAPTER IX

It was September now, and beyond the Atlantic, in America, this was Labor Day; in Europe, the war had started its second year. In New York there would be bright lights along the avenues, thousands of motor cars would be moving along the Hudson River Parkway, and there would be no barbed wire stretched along the sand at Coney Island. All day long I thought of the holiday at home as we drove round the English coast, from Dover to Deal and Sandwich and on to Ramsgate and Margate and up the Thames to London.

We passed the house where Gibbon had written *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, and George Arliss's summer house, abandoned in a shelled area, and many deserted villas—houses along a seashore where the old had come to spend their last years. Roses were blooming wild and the grass was high in the gardens. The spot where King Canute had commanded the sea to move back was heavily barricaded now; all along the coast were entanglements of barbed wire and guns and searchlight batteries and soldiers. It was a warm, golden

day, filled with the silences of autumn.

At a petrol pool on the hill above St. Margaret's Bay we asked an Englishman how it felt to live at a place like that with "the Fatherland" in sight (Dover people now called the French coast "the Fatherland"). Grinning, the Englishman said to us: "We feel all right—we're too close for the big guns and too far away for the little ones."

We saw the churchyard where a bomb had fallen—the yard of the church whose rector had remarked: "It's better to raise the dead than to harm the living." Along the beaches of the famous resorts we were challenged by sentries. We drove along the Dover Road and the Old Kent Road, highways which a year before had been as crowded with traffic as the main arteries leading into New York. These roads were the front line now; we were almost the only civilians upon them. It was a lonesome, desolate ride, and several times we were alarmed to find the road running through long flat stretches without trees and without ditches. We were conscious of having no place for cover.

At Ramsgate, which the Germans a few days before had raided, we asked a policeman to direct us to the destruction. He told us: "Take the next left turning, follow that road for about a mile until you come to a pub and a church, then bear left again and you will be at the scene of the incident."

The scene included three hundred and twenty-five destroyed houses, and about a thousand others that had been damaged. We talked to several people, almost all of whom, when they heard we were Americans, thanked us personally for what the American Red Cross had done to help them. We noticed that they talked very little

about the houses that had been hit—what concerned them was that the people in the houses had escaped. “’Twas a bloody marvel,” said an air-raid warden.

The siren sounded as we were leaving the town, but we decided to drive on anyhow. Soon we saw some planes in the sky, but we said to one another they were Hurricanes—they were Hurricanes, we hoped.

We drove through raids almost all the way to London. Reaching London by the East India Docks Road, we came through the East End, along the Commercial Road, and on by the Bank of England to the Strand. We saw no sign of damage in that part of the city—it looked just as it had looked when we had left for Dover.

At the hotel I asked Maude: “How is London?”

“London’s all right,” Maude said. “How’s Dover? We’ve been worried sick about Dover.”

“Dover’s all right,” I assured her.

We were to find often in the weeks ahead that we almost always were to worry about places where we were not.

The battle was just before us now, and during the next few days everyone could sense it. The city had done all that it could do with what it could get together—it was ready now and waiting. There were great qualities during those days in London—there was faith and there was courage and there was a noble humility I had never known before in any British city. It was as though the people felt themselves in the sight of God. The English would not put such a feeling like that into words, the English do not express themselves so emotionally; but just the same there was an atmosphere about us of a

church. London had made peace with its inner self; it was composed, everything spiritually was at rest.

Once during those last quiet days I went into St. Paul's Cathedral, and there I found, distributed on the pews, a pamphlet which put into words the feeling we could sense about us in London. The clergy of the cathedral had drawn up a summary of what a year of war had meant to the people of England; it was called *A Review and a Re-dedication*.

"Thanksgiving"—so it started. "There have been times during the past few months when it has seemed hard to find much for which we could give thanks. That is all the more reason for seeing that we do not let this element in our prayer fall into the background; to do so will certainly mean a loss of proportion, and a weakening of faith. Let us therefore set ourselves to discover those events in which we can clearly discern the hand of God working for good, whether in blessing or in discipline."

The clergy of St. Paul's then listed England's blessings:

"The heroism, endurance and sacrifice of those who have fought in Norway, France and Flanders. The ceaseless vigilance of the Navy and the Merchant service. The triumphant skill and daring of the Air Force. The unity in faith and purpose which binds together those who are fighting in the cause of freedom. The devotion of those who have given their lives in the service of their country.

"The patient steadfastness of those who have been in training for the protection of the common life: the results of that training in effective service in time of need and danger.

"The spirit of determination without arrogance in our government; the demand for service and sacrifice from the nation as a whole.

"The strengthening of the sense of national solidarity: the co-operation of all parties and classes; the growing realization of community and mutual helpfulness under the strain of suffering.

"The clearer recognition of the moral issues involved in this struggle; and of the price which will have to be paid for a new order, both in international relations and in the structure of society at home.

"The deepening realization of the hand of God upon man both in judgment and in succour; the re-awakening of man's sense of his need of God, and the response of God in the gift of new faith, energy and devotion.

"We bless Thee, Heavenly Father, that naught can separate us from the love of Christ, neither death nor life, nor things present nor things to come; that in tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword, in all these things,—we are more than conquerors."

The next section was called "Penitence":

"Some people are inclined to deprecate penitence as tending to weaken our conviction of the justice of our cause and our resolve to achieve victory. The answer to that is clear. Only cowardice, hypocrisy or a bad conscience makes men afraid to know the truth about themselves. If we are to ask for God's help we must do so on His terms. Let us therefore acknowledge with sincerity the truths about our national sins and weaknesses which war has laid bare.

"We had sought for peace, but did not know or would

not face the price which must be paid for having it. We tried to keep peace rather than to make it.

“We had prided ourselves on our empire, but had begun to lose our strength and honour because we had put power and wealth before responsibility and duty.

“We had set ourselves to achieve recovery, prosperity and security, but they were to be for ourselves, our nation, or even for some classes and sections within our nation, rather than for mankind.

“We had perverted the true order of human life, by making wealth and profit, rather than the satisfaction of human need, the aim of our industry and commerce.

“We had been blind to the continuance of needless suffering and waste in human life.

“We had forgotten God and believed that we could build a better world by our own skill and effort.

“We Christians had become as salt that has lost its savour.

“O Thou, whose commandment is life eternal, we have sinned by class injustice, by indifference to the sufferings of the poor, by sloth and pride and self-seeking. Turn Thou our hearts that we may truly repent, and lead us into the way of truth and justice.”

The next section was called “Intercession”:

“Let us before we pray for our country and ourselves, remember the needs of the world. The common need of mankind, bewildered, frightened, embittered, led astray by delusions which end in despair because they do not lead to God and His righteousness.

“The people of Europe:

“Those who are suffering from oppression, inva-

sion and exploitation; those who have seen their national life break under the strain of fear and treachery.

“The refugees: all who are starving, destitute and without work; all who are cut off from home and friends; all who bear the strain of anxiety and fear.

“The oppressors: those who have surrendered to the policy of domination by power; those who wilfully distort and withhold truth; those who deliberately practise and encourage cruelty; all who have been led by them into error and evil.

“The peoples of China and Japan; the wasteful cruelty of this continued war; the danger of compliance under pressure of expediency, with the demands of the aggressor.

“The peoples of India: their demand for freedom to exercise responsibility for themselves: the British Government facing the test of our responsibility and our sincerity.

“The peoples of Africa: involved in war by the strife of ‘Christian’ nations: their future share of the freedom and justice for which we are fighting.

“O God, shame our jealousies, and lay low our pride; unite in fellowship and mutual service the East and the West, the North and the South, that we may live in peace together, in honour preferring one another.”

Finally, there came “Dedication”:

“Let us pray that God will use us, if it be His will, as the means through which the domination of force and falsehood is broken, and mankind set free to build a new way of life.

"That He will teach us what it costs to be so used, and make us willing to pay that cost.

"That government, set free from rivalry and party jealousy, may be directed to the good of the whole community.

"That industry may be so ordered that human needs may be supplied, and men may live in happiness because they live in justice.

"That education may become the means through which there is given to all alike the opportunity to grow in wisdom, discipline and the knowledge of God.

"That the Church, remembering Whose it is and Whom it serves, may be a living witness to Christ in worship, faith and action.

"Let us pray especially that as the pressure of war increases we may be kept true to the aim for which we have pledged ourselves to fight, and may be preserved from loss of faith, or honour.

"From boastfulness and pride, from the refusal to acknowledge our need of God.

"From bitterness and vindictiveness against our enemies, from persecution or suspicion of refugees and aliens.

"From surrender of freedom in speech and thought, from making expediency the test of truth and right.

"From cowardice and selfishness, from seeking to escape our share of hardship, or making profit out of the need of others.

"Good Lord deliver us.

"Let us pray that God will keep us in that faith, steadfast, brave, patient and humble.

"Let us dedicate the life of this nation and our own lives, in suffering or in security, in success or in reverses,

to the doing of God's will and the service of mankind.

"Here O Lord we offer and present unto Thee ourselves, our souls and bodies, to be a continual sacrifice unto Thee. We beseech Thee to take us as we are, and of Thy mercy make us what Thou wouldst have us, through Jesus Christ our Lord."

In ecclesiastical terms, the clergy of St. Paul's had stated the war hopes of Great Britain.

Those last seven days before the beginning of the Battle of London were like those others which had been strung out over England from the time of Dunkirk on—magnificent and full of northern sunshine, such days as the country had not had within the generation.

Finally we came to the last hours.

It was Saturday, the 7th of September, a perfect day. In my cables to *PM* for that day, I see that I wrote: "From what I have seen during the last month, I would say to Americans at home 'Don't be discouraged about England.' England has courage and spirit and if its Air Force can hold out, it can hold on until finally the day will come when England will accumulate superior equipment. I for one do not doubt any longer the ability of the Royal Air Force to hold out, and my opinion is held by practically every American in London. Even Joe Kennedy is feeling better today." I had talked that morning with the Ambassador.

That afternoon Jimmy Sheean and Ed Murrow and I decided to drive down the Thames to the east of London. We knew that all conditions were ideal for battle, so we decided to get somewhere outside the city in order to watch. We had found from our experiences in

Dover that you could not get the full grasp of a gigantic air assault if you keep inside a city. London in particular was too tremendous and it was mostly low-lying—there were almost no places in London from which you could get perspective. So we drove down through Limehouse and Stepney and on behind the immense docks where people were busy about their Saturday afternoon errands; they were buying potatoes and cabbage and meat for their Sunday dinner. Farther down the Thames we watched two fires burning in an oil-storage plant; the Germans had started them the night before. We watched seven big ships moving up the Thames, steaming slowly toward London. Then we crossed over the river, bought three tin-hatfuls of apples from a farmer for two shillings, and coming on a haystack on the edge of a turnip-field, we lay down to eat apples and to sleep in the sun.

We had not been there long before the sirens began sounding and anti-aircraft guns began firing. A squadron of British fighters appeared, making toward the coast. Soon we heard the sound of fighting in the air over us. Looking up, we saw, very high, a battle formation of German bombers with German and British fighters engaging in a desperate combat. We took cover in a ditch and soon were joined by an English boy and girl who had been bicycling and by the passengers and driver of a bus which had been abandoned on the side of the road. We heard shrapnel falling on the pavement. While this engagement was taking place, the bus-driver asked us quietly if we had seen a cartoon in the paper of two monkeys who saw an air-raid warden in battle dress coming toward them in a jungle; one monkey said to the other: "Let's beat it, the bloody fool is coming to civilize us."

The British fighters had to return to their base to re-

fuel, and while they were grounded the Germans sent over a second wave of twenty-four bombers followed by a third wave of thirty-six. These ships flew at a very great height, glistening like beautiful steel birds in the afternoon sunshine. They flew in perfect formation and soon we heard the terrific detonation of bombs being dropped on London. A fourth wave of Germans passed just over our heads, and this was a frightening experience as we knew we were near a military objective—the British fighter airdrome was very close to us, and we expected at any moment to see bombs falling toward us. Murrow, who had gone over to the haystack, shouted that the haystack was dwindling at such a rate that he was beginning to feel as big as an elephant cowering behind a peanut. Sheean, in the ditch, kept saying: “This is just like Spain.”

Soon towards London we saw immense columns of smoke rise, then we heard the Germans returning home, followed this time by the refuelled British fighters, engaging them all the way to the coast. We watched the smoke for a long time and then went down the road to a pub, where the proprietress talked to us about the battle—she was worried about London and about poor women and children. She said she was worried too about dumb animals during battles.

When night came, we went back to the haystack and watched the most appalling and depressing sight any of us had ever seen. We were horrified by the sight. It almost made us physically ill to see the enormity of the flames which lit the entire western sky. The London that we knew was burning—the London which had taken thirty generations of men a thousand years to build—and the Nazis had done that in thirty seconds.

We watched like people bewitched, and I was not aware, until Ed told me later, that I said over and over again: "London is burning; London is burning." A dark cloud of smoke filled the northern sky all the way from the city to the North Sea. From our haystack we watched searchlights and the fires and smoke; then for hours we heard German planes coming over in twos and threes. The guns would shoot, lighting the sky with sparkling bursts; flares came down, and there were red bullets flying through the air—bullets from the Bofurs. Shrapnel fell. That night was like the Revelation of St. John. It almost broke our hearts to think of what the world had to lose in that city, to think of all the people living there, to think of the ruthlessness, the barbarity. . . . We were frightened and sick.

On and on the German planes came, two and three at a time. Gradually the night wind rose and it got cold and we covered ourselves with straw. Finally we drove to a hotel at Gravesend and slept in our clothes, while guns rattled on, and planes droned on, and bombs fell in our neighbourhood, on both banks of the Thames. It was almost morning before the all-clear sounded.

At breakfast Jimmy said he had dreamed the Germans were landing at New Orleans and that he was in Texas trying to get a telegram through to St. Louis. He said they had told him the Germans were in St. Louis too. Ed asked Jimmy how the Germans were making their landing at New Orleans—from barges? Sheean said: "From planes." There were clouds and the sky was too dark and smoky for the Germans to try much that day over London, so we started in early.

We drove back to London where we saw huge fires—twelve tanks of the Anglo-American Oil Company

were blazing. We saw factories gutted and docks burning and bomb craters, and there were policemen to direct us around time bombs that had fallen in highways and streets. That was a depressing sight, but what really disturbed us was the East End itself. We saw English men and women, standing in streets with all they had in suitcases, waiting to be evacuated. We saw homes ruined. All along the way we had passed so quietly the day before, we now saw destruction. We zigzagged until we came to the hotel.

Maude came in and began to weep. An incendiary bomb had fallen in front of her house and the house two doors from hers had been demolished. "The swine!" she said. "It isn't fair—they just bomb the poor working areas, the houses where the two-pound- and three-pound-a-week people live—the people who all their lives have tried to be decent and do the right thing." Maude wailed—her first and, so far as I know, her last fit of weeping. "Oh, this is a horrible kind of war."

The Battle of London had started, and on that first Sunday it seemed to all of us like the end of civilization.



CHAPTER X

On Sunday, soon after dark, the Germans came over London again, flying high and in great numbers and bombing the city steadily throughout the night. That was a terrible night; the British had not concentrated their anti-aircraft guns as yet in the capital, and for hours we heard bombs falling and heard almost no retaliation from the ground. It gave the people of London a sinking feeling. Down the bombs screamed, crashing through buildings, shaking the earth, exploding. All that night screaming, whistling bombs fell on the city. We did not know at that time anything about bombs—we did not know how to judge their distance by sound; all of them frightened everyone. It was a night of terror, a night of real fear, yet the city held firm.

My room at the Waldorf was on the fifth floor, in the rear, overlooking the markets in Covent Garden. The Waldorf was an early steel-framed building, designed, I think, by Stanford White—a hotel in appearance somewhat like the Astor Hotel in New York. It was a safe structure—a bomb would not fall through more than six

storeys. I had only three storeys above me, but I decided to take my chances and sleep in bed. I stayed up until midnight; then I turned off the light and drew back the curtains and watched and listened, and, like several million other people in London, I counted the hours until daylight would break. Overhead was the almost constant droning sound of the German bombers, the vroom, vroom, vroom of the desynchronized German motors. Bombs fell all about our neighbourhood that night—around the corner in the Kingsway, just across from Covent Garden; several times they were so close that the hotel shook violently; several times I found myself stretched flat on the bathroom floor (the bathroom seemed the safest place to me, perhaps because it was small). That night I resigned myself as everyone else in London did—if I was to be bombed, I was to be bombed. I remember listening to whistling bombs and saying to myself: “So that is how a whistling bomb sounds.” For nearly twenty seconds you could hear it, then you would hear the sound of the bomb hitting a ground surface, followed a second later by the burst made by the detonation. For the first time we heard sticks of bombs falling—heard one in the distance, a second coming closer, a third one very near. We heard time bombs and duds—heard them fall, heard them hit—then we would listen for the explosion that did not come. It was like waiting for an unplayed note in a scale.

Gradually the hours passed as they always had passed—they were hours that had to be endured, and I remember thinking of an old proverb: “Everything has an end, and a piece of string has two.” We thanked God that it was only September, that London was a northern city

and the nights were still short. I bathed and shaved early and, red-eyed and tired, went down to breakfast. Everyone else that morning was red-eyed and tired, and everywhere there was the smell of smoke, for once again London had been burning. Everyone was tired, but almost everyone was there as usual—the waiters, the cashier, the boy who came round with the morning papers. We were having breakfast with linen and china on a battlefield. Everyone was worried and made no effort to conceal his worry. “It’s terrible,” said the head waiter, shaking his head, “terrible.” His house had been hit during the night, his house was demolished—he made a deprecating gesture with his hands. “I was in the shelter in the garden and had to come to work in a pair of pyjamas and an overcoat—it’s all I have.”

One of the footmen was working the lift that morning, and I thought nothing of his being there until Maude came in with the dust-cloth and the broom. “It’s terrible,” Maude said, “the lift boy was killed last night; he was on duty with the Home Guard near his home in Lambeth; he was on sentry duty at the entrance to a shelter, and a bomb killed him.”

Ivey, who did the cleaning, had been buried three hours in the basement of a house. “Buried three hours,” Maude said, “and she got to work this morning as usual.”

I left the hotel early and started out to inspect the damage. At that time I thought it was my duty to try to inspect every building that had been hit in London—everything depended at that time on whether London could stand up to the attack; everything was at stake and we knew it.

London on that Monday morning, the 9th of September, was a shocking sight—the damage done on that sec-

ond night had been appalling. All about London tired men were working, clearing wreckage, digging in the ruins of houses, repairing water mains and gas lines, and plugging broken sewers. Everywhere there was the sound of broken glass being swept off streets, the sound of hammers. The city was dazed, but it was working. The people knew by instinct that no matter what happened they must stay twenty-four hours ahead of the raiders; they must dig out and clean up from last night's wreckage in readiness for tonight's. Thousands and thousands of volunteer workers were taking part in this gigantic job. They knew they had to keep the streets open, the lights on, the water flowing, the food coming in. They had to keep a city going and at the same time fight a battle. All about the city vans were busy hauling the personal belongings of Londoners—thousands of Londoners were moving from damaged to undamaged houses. The civilians had become an army, London was depending on the civil defence—on the people.

And with daylight the people took courage. Somehow you felt you could stand anything so long as there was light to see by; it was the darkness that was so frightening. Londoners during breathing-spells now began talking, telling the kind of stories they were to continue to tell for weeks and months, personal stories, laughing at themselves in the middle of the battle. In Berkeley Square at the Chase National Bank, Bertram Cruger told me about a neighbour's housekeeper telling his housekeeper how close a bomb had come to her the night before—"so close," said she, "it fairly lifted me skirts over me head." A policeman in the square told Bert and me of going the night before into a shelter and finding seven old ladies sitting there, all wearing gas-masks, all sitting

perfectly erect, and all ready for the worst. "How long can you stand this?" the policeman had asked. One of them replied: "About five years."

The whole of London laughed when it heard that a bomb, hitting the Natural History Museum, had destroyed the brontosaurus, and all London began to hope the Germans would smash the Albert Memorial.

Everybody you met was filled with personal news about the battle—this was indeed a personal war, and as early as that second day everybody began to tell his own bomb stories, to break right into the middle of your story with one of his. You had difficulty after that second day in getting anyone to listen. Joe Kennedy told us that seventeen time bombs had fallen between his house in Prince's Gate and his garage. He had found an incendiary bomb initialled JPK. Ray Daniell of the *New York Times* had been evacuated from his house—there was a time bomb outside the door. Ed Murrow had been blasted out of his office; Eric Sevareid and Larry Leseuer of the Columbia Broadcasting Company had moved in with Ed—they had been bombed from their neighbourhood. Helen Kirkpatrick had spent a night in a safe stable; Quentin Reynolds of *Collier's* and Bob Loew of *Liberty* had had their windows blown out at Lansdowne House. Virginia Cowles and Lord and Lady O'Neill had been drinking tea at home when the house opposite was hit, burying six people; a page had gone through the Dorchester shouting: "Miss Virginia Cowles, her house is on fire."

Madeline Miller phoned that the William Allen White committee had no office; their building had been demolished. Diana Cooper insisted that Duff move into

the shelter in the Dorchester basement, and the Dorchester put up signs on the Turkish bath: "Reserved for Lady Diana Cooper and Mr. Duff Cooper," "Reserved for Lord and Lady Halifax." Later this quartet moved into the women's gymnasium, which was less stuffy, and slept with Victor Cazalet. A rumour began to spread around London that Queen Wilhelmina snored.

From that second day on, we knew in London that life was chance. The chances were with us, we soon discovered, but as there was no certainty, we were never sure that at the next moment our time would not come. One night Bob Casey of the *Chicago Daily News* took a guest home after dinner, and when he got back he found his hotel had been banged in his absence. And Eric Sevareid once told me on the street that whether you lived or died depended on such chance things as whether you smoked or did not smoke a cigarette. He had started somewhere, but for some trivial reason had been delayed; he said he would have been killed sure if he had been on time. Like everyone else, I too got to understand the sensation of the frailty of existence. You were never free from the feel that death was close—there was always the tension.

Monday night was another terrific night—Monday, the 9th of September. Again there were heavy concentrations of German bombers over London and again the bombs fell in the darkness. Lying in bed, counting hours, I remember thinking of how merciless this war was, of how mad the world was to destroy so much wealth and work—of how certainly the whole world would be called

on to pay for this ruthlessness, for this misuse of mechanical invention.

Many homes were hit that night in the East End. The cinema adjoining Madame Tussaud's was laid flat, a bomb fell in the garden of one of London's palaces, the side wall of one of Sir Christopher Wren's churches was wrecked. Hospitals were hit, sections of the city had no gas. Time bombs were showered over the city, demoralizing traffic.

The hours of that night passed, however, just as had those of the night before—they were borne by the people of the city. Daylight broke again, bringing another day, bringing Tuesday, the 10th of September. That Tuesday was one of the great days in British history, for to London it brought a revelation. Suddenly six million people came to realize that human character could stand up to anything if it had to. Screaming and high-explosive and incendiary bombs had fallen for a third night all over the city, and on Tuesday morning the people realized that Monday night had not been so terrifying as Sunday night, and that Sunday night had not been so terrifying as Saturday night. The principle of horror had been established. From then on London knew—London could take it.

On Tuesday they kept on digging and sweeping and hammering; they still had their necks above water. So that week passed—the days and the nights, and somewhere about that time, I don't remember just when, the Prime Minister ordered guns into London from everywhere. When darkness settled, there suddenly went up a terrific anti-aircraft barrage that continued throughout the city, hour after hour. The guns were said to have shot two million dollars' worth of shells during that night,

and shrapnel rained on London rooftops. It was a wonderful sound—it gave the city new courage.

Just as there never had been such a month as August at Dover, there also had never been such a week in the world as the 7th to the 14th of September in London. At the end of that week, however, most of us, somewhat to our surprise, were still alive, and most of London was still standing—the blitzkrieg had not been so bad as we had expected it would be, the battle itself had not been so bad as the anticipation. At the end of the week the city had come through with its lights still burning, with the sewerage system still functioning, with the busses still running by day and the tubes still operating round the clock. Food was good and abundant and we had water to drink and bathe in, and there were flowers blooming in the park and there was music in Trafalgar Square—the band of the Grenadier Guards made that their gesture of defiance. Barbers went on cutting hair, and laundresses washed clothes. One day, passing St. Giles' Cripplegate, I heard an organist playing Handel—in the church in which Milton was buried, someone quietly was playing Handel into space. St. Giles' did not have a window left in it.

London at that moment was magnificent.

Everywhere there were craters and ruin, but the city in this crisis had rediscovered itself; it was living as it never had lived. Everywhere there was courage, and six million people who had lived humdrum lives now learned what it was like to live for civilization. You came out on the street at daybreak now with the feeling that you personally had been helping to save the world.

Each of those first seven nights of the Battle of London differed from the others. The night of Friday was the most horribly beautiful. I went alone that night to Jack Straw's Castle at the top of the Heath, and from a window on the second floor, in darkness, I looked down over the city. Sitting in a room that once had been used by Dickens, I heard the sirens sound, saw the Germans coming. Soon big field-guns began to fire. For hours I watched. The sky was cloudless, the moon almost full, and there was a chill in the air—the kind of chill we knew in the South in October on nights when persimmons were ripe and ready for the possums. The still shine of the moon beat down on old English trees and on old houses and gardens, and all about the horizon, in a great circle, there was a rim of flame. Guns fired, and high in the air shells burst like stars brighter than Orion, more brilliant than the Dipper. There were puffs of smoke around the moon and the sound of bombs falling. Very few searchlights were used during this raid, but there were many flares and for a time the sky was tinged pink by fires in the South of London. There was a lull and then there was the most terrific shooting we had heard. The middle of the night blazed with shells, and suddenly two bombs came screaming down near Jack Straw's, one falling after the other so quickly and so near that the old hotel seemed like a ship in a heavy sea. The hotel rose and soared, then settled down again.

Next morning I left early and caught the underground for the Strand. At the Waldorf, Maude came in to talk about the Palace being hit. Speaking of the King, she said: "What that boy has gone through for this country!" Maude dusted in a hurry, for this was her half-day off.

"I'm going to sit awhile in the Abbey," she said; "I love our great memorials."

Ivey, the charwoman, had been bombed again that night. She had been in a shelter under a church that was hit. As before, Ivey had reported at the hotel that morning on time. Maude said: "I reckon she's a credit to Britain."

We worked hard through those days and nights, trying to get into words for our papers the feel and the look of London. The days were peaceful enough, for the Royal Air Force had command of the air over England; it was the nights that were such hell. Sometimes at night we slept, sometimes we went out with the firemen and ambulance-drivers—with the civilian forces who were holding London—sometimes we ate dinner with friends and slept wherever night caught us, in basements, under stairways, on quilts spread on a floor.

One night we went to a birthday party for Nancy Tree in Queen Anne's Gate. The night developed into a hard one, into one of the very worst, and we soon found we should be unable to make our way home; so at midnight we went to bed in beds, but after half a dozen bombs had shaken the area, we found ourselves in the basement, sleeping on satin cushions brought down from drawing-room furniture. In one room were Ronnie Tree and Nancy and Jim Thomas, parliamentary private secretary to Anthony Eden, and I. Nancy had piled her cushions beneath a table. After a time we heard her say, out of the darkness: "If anyone had ever told me I would spend my forty-first birthday sleeping under a table with

three men, I would never have believed them."

One night we went to the Dorchester Hotel to eat with Diana Cooper. In the midst of a battle, with guns firing, there was an orchestra. We told the waiter we should like potted shrimps—they were on the menu card. The waiter smiled—they were on the menu card, but they weren't in the kitchen. So we ordered soup and chicken, which was not rationed, and with that we had potatoes and peas and coffee. Exactly at eight thirty, as we were drinking the soup, the Germans arrived over Hyde Park. The huge gun outside the hotel cut loose with a salvo, and Diana winced. The orchestra began to play old American tunes—"Lover, Come Back to Me," "Indian Love Call," "Alice-Blue Gown." Across the street in the park there was another terrific blast, and the hotel trembled. A crooner began to sing: "I'll always adore it. . . ." Diana asked the waiter what protection we had over us. "Good steel beams," he told us. Duff Cooper spoke of the cinema next to Madame Tussaud's being hit. Diana said: "The Prime Minister thought it was Madame Tussaud's itself that had been hit; he thought the waxworks had got it, and he said he thought it would be interesting to learn who was included in the casualties." Moira Budberg said H. G. Wells also had thought it had been the waxworks, and Wells had said he supposed that he and the King and Queen and Hitler and Stalin and Lady Astor had at last all been melted into one corporate state.

The guns continued to bang, the planes still hovered above. We ordered coffee, the orchestra began "Old Man River." Suddenly there was a great thud—somewhere near, a bomb had dropped. Diana and some of the rest of us were so curious that we left the dining-room and went outside to see what had happened. A bomb

had dropped in the park. No damage. As we made our way back to our niche in the battlefield—to the table under the steel beams—we passed through a lobby that was crowded with guests and with people who had come in from Golders Green to use the Dorchester as a shelter. “This is just like the lobby of the Drake Hotel in Chicago,” Diana said. “All it lacks is a model of the newest motor car.”

Duff talked about creation and destruction—how much easier it is to destroy than to build.

At midnight the orchestra played “God Save the King” and we stood, and just as the last notes were finished, the guns in the park gave a roaring blast, and everyone laughed. “This is like being on the *Titanic*,” said Eve Curie. “Only England isn’t the *Titanic*,” added Diana.

I started to walk home, across central London; there were no taxis. The sky of south and east London was glowing with flames, guns were firing over the entire city, and bombs were falling in the southwest part. Anti-aircraft shells were bursting in the clear yellow starry sky. A yellow moon was shining, and out of the depths of Hyde Park an owl began to hoot. That owl ¹ was too much for me. I turned back and practically ran to the Dorchester, and that night I spent on a couch in David Bruce’s room. The firing continued until five o’clock, until dawn. And at eight o’clock David and I went for a walk in the park that had been such a storm centre only a few hours before. It was as quiet and peaceful as Rock Creek in Washington, as Central Park in New York.

On another night I went to a musicale at Sibyl Colfax’s house. She had been in the habit of giving musicales during peacetime and she said she did not intend

¹ Since the blackout started, owls have come into central London.

to allow Germans to stop her. Sibyl had lost the windows of her house, but she had boarded them up and strengthened the rooms with timber. The guns fired and the Germans hovered above but a violinist, a cellist, and a viola-player, accompanied by a pianist, played Brahms and Beethoven and Bach. It was militant music.

I managed to walk home that night—there was a lull late in the evening and I made it.

“Did you hear the bombs dropping?” Maude asked the next morning as she came in to remove the blackout. I told her that I had. Maude said the raid the night before had caught her at the cinema, but she had determined to see the picture through no matter what happened. “I’d paid a shilling for me seat.” Maude said the only place she really would hate to be caught during a raid would be at the hairdresser’s under one of those hair-drying machines. She said: “That really would give me a fright.”

That morning I went off to look at rest centres and clothing and feeding centres, to see how the London County Council and Lady Reading’s organization (the Women’s Volunteer Service) were handling the homeless. I saw the bombed eating and receiving free clothing, I saw them being housed and resettled in new places. London, I found on that tour, was ready to handle tens of thousands of homeless—the city had three lines of defence: the County Council moved people into churches, and if the churches got hit they would move into a series of public halls, and if those went they would fall back on Lady Reading.

We made a tour of a southeast suburb where a church and houses had been demolished during the night. The desolation was exactly like that I had seen in Georgia

and Carolina after a tornado had passed. A crowd of people had assembled, and a woman pushing a baby-carriage said to us: "It will take a million bombs to get London down."

We drove back to central London and that afternoon I went to walk in the Green Park to look at the superb chrysanthemums and dahlias that were blooming on that battlefield.

I never felt easy in the dining-rooms of the Savoy and Dorchester and Ritz hotels after the battle started. The food and the music got on your conscience when hundreds of thousands were in shelters, when people on every side were dying. Very few people were able to dine in those dining-rooms very often. You felt there was not time for that, even in the spare hours which everyone must find now and then—even during a battle. There was always the pressure of emergency about you, always the tension of death—you felt you must be doing something, you must be out and about.

Gradually London settled down to a state of siege. Busses began operating more or less on schedule again, thousands of people began to get to work in any way they could—they began to hitch-hike to their offices. All over London signs went up: "Business as Usual." Everyone realized that this was a production war: that the factories must be kept going, that the stores and restaurants that supplied the factory workers must stay open—it was total war at last, with everyone a member of the civil army. The girl who sold coats at Selfridge's store now could feel she was as important to her country as the soldier behind the gun in Hyde Park—she was working

under fire just as he was; bombs came down on Selfridge's just as they fell by the battery off the Marble Arch. There was resolution and determination—London now depended on the people, and the people knew it.

Day after day there were spasmodic, desultory nuisance raids, and night after night down came the bombs, from dusk to daybreak. Life became basic and simple. You went to bed soon after nightfall, you got up after the all-clear at sunup. I saw traffic jams in London at five o'clock in the morning—the city was rousing itself from the shelters and starting out for the day. We lived like milkmen and farmers in the biggest city in the world. It was a hard life.

I went out with firemen and ambulance-drivers, talked to air-raid wardens, visited shelters. The whole of Great Britain began to praise these civilians. Movements were started to raise funds for them, the nation wanted somehow to honour them, the King created the Order of the George Cross. I went to see the men behind the guns, to see the men who tended the balloons.

In London during those days, when the sun went down and the sirens sounded, you had to decide which you preferred most—security or sleep. If you found you had to have rest in some unsafe place more than the feeling of being safe on some patch of cement in a subway, if you found you had to have sleep, then you also had to make up your mind you would not let the noises of the night disturb you. You had to say to yourself you were not going to mistake the backfire of a bus for a falling bomb, you were not going to allow the desynchronized sound of an icebox to send you hurling to the floor with your fingers in your ears and your mouth wide open to keep your teeth from breaking when the bomb exploded.

I decided that so far as I was concerned I preferred rest—I would take my chance with the bombs. So I would undress and get into bed and then, for a time, listen deliberately to the battle—to the guns and the planes humming five miles up in the sky. Being an American, I would think often of the United States. What would happen if New York were London. Would New Yorkers stand bombs like cockneys? I never doubted. New York would not be bombed out of the blue. The city would be prepared for the attack beforehand—it would go through all the preliminary stages and by the time of the bombing it would be ready emotionally to die too; Americans believed in freedom. We would never hesitate if bombs were falling on Fifth Avenue, on Michigan Boulevard, on Seattle. And we would fortify ourselves personally just as I had in London—we would turn back in our history to other times of trouble, we would say to ourselves that what Washington's men and Lee's men could stand, we could stand.

Often in the darkness of the London blackout, I would think of the cities at home—of Manhattan and Boston and Chicago, of Dallas and El Paso rising up from the plains of Texas, of the California towns on the ocean. What kind of basements did those cities have? Of what were their mayors thinking? I was encouraged by thoughts of concrete and steel—London's newest buildings were holding up well under bomb blast. Bombs did not penetrate through more than thirty-six inches of reinforced concrete—through more than five modern floors. The houses built during the reign of Queen Anne were holding well, too—it was the architecture of the Victorian era that was turning out to be flimsy. I would think of the cities of the future—of cities that would

build hospitals far away from railway stations and bridges, that would move schools to safe places, that would bury gas and electric and water mains a hundred feet below the earth. Some Englishmen thought whole cities would be dug underground after this war was over; the earth would be beautiful and landscaped on the surface, people would live in deep shelters, and the land would be turned over to cows in pastures.

I would listen again to the Germans cruising thirty thousand feet above—some German up there either touched an electric button or he didn't touch it, and whether he did or didn't meant I would or would not kick the bucket. I would say I must stop thinking such thoughts—I must get some rest. Sometimes when too many bombs fell in the neighbourhood, I would go below, to the shelter in the basement. The air was bad and about me men and women were snoring and coughing and belching; it was stuffy, you almost smothered. Somebody near you was sure to have influenza. But you did not hear the guns or the planes or the sickening sound of the bombs. Eventually you slept.

Sometimes at night there would be fires near and we got up and went upstairs to watch. Sometimes the London firemen put out more than a thousand fires in a night. There were twenty thousand of them in the London Voluntary Fire Service; it was the most dangerous and most important duty in the city during this period. Almost a thousand of them had been killed or wounded, for the Germans bombed them as they poured water on the flames. The firemen were the most admired men in London—they and the boys in the Royal Air Force headed the list of heroes.

One night we went out with the firemen—Helen Kirk-

patrick of the Chicago *Daily News* and Bob Post of the New York *Times* and I. We crossed to the south bank of the Thames to Fire Headquarters, and there we were taken in charge by our friends Blackstone and Fordham, the brilliant young Deputy Fire Chiefs of London. Blackstone was a descendant of the man who wrote the *Commentaries*, and he as well as Fordham was well educated, accommodating, and efficient. Far below the ground they showed us their set-up; they knew where every fire was burning in the whole of the city, they knew where every piece of equipment was fighting. They had 2,400 very small but powerfully equipped fire trucks—you almost might call them fire taxis, they were so little. All over London this equipment was dispersed in alleys and side streets so that if station houses were bombed the apparatus would not be lost. The Fire Department, like every other department of the British government, was fighting the blitzkrieg with dispersal as its rule.

It was a heavy night; the Germans were attacking in numbers, fires were burning in many areas. While we were in the message centre, a call came in that high explosives had been dropped—it was either in Sackville Street or in Savile Row, I can't remember. A large fire had been started. Helen and Bob and I went with a brigade chief and a chauffeur to answer that call. Soon we had arrived in that famous area of central London, rushing through streets where only a few hours before we had walked. We found the new Vine Street police station had been damaged badly and a number of policemen had been killed; the building across the street had been destroyed by a high explosive, and buildings on either side were blazing. While the firemen fought

we saw searchlights focusing above us, and we knew what that meant: the Germans were returning, the Germans were aiming at the fire. We heard a whistler coming and all of us except the firemen dashed into the entrance of the police station. Police pushed us down on our faces, Helen cut her hand on a shard of glass. Down the bomb came, a block or so away, shaking us and everything around us. Then we again got up and watched the firemen, still playing water on the flames. While we were there I remember hearing a telephone ring in the police station—bombs do strange things; once I heard a telephone ringing in a house that was only a shell. A policeman in the station house answered: "Very sorry, madam, we can't come at the moment—we're quite busy just now." The demolition squad arrived, ambulance workers began taking out the dead. Later on, a courier told our brigade chief a certain restaurant in Soho had been hit by incendiary bombs, the roof was ablaze, and the manager was phoning. "Tell him he'll have to take his turn in the queue," said the brigade chief; "there are ten fires ahead of him."

Within less than an hour the fire across from the police station was under control, and we drove on with the chief to a fire house on Shaftesbury Avenue—it has been hit since then. Helen and Bob and the chauffeur and I sat in the car in the street, and while we were there, we heard a stick of bombs coming. We sat in cold terror while they dropped three blocks, two blocks, a half block away. I saw Helen bite her lips and lean forward and Bob and I cringed; the chauffeur, however, did not so much as budge. "How can you sit like that?" I asked him. "I got used to bombs during those first nights on the docks," he said. "They're either going to get you or

they aren't." Just then a piece of shrapnel fell with a dead thud on the top of the car and we told the chauffeur frankly we had had enough—we wanted to head for home. The chauffeur and the brigade chief then took me to the Waldorf, and Bob to the *Times* office; then they started to Wilton Row in Belgravia with Helen, but on their way they stopped in Parliament Square—the beautiful church of St. Margaret's Westminster in the yard of the Abbey was being completely gutted.

The three of us cabled home the next day that the London Fire Department was one of the wonders of the world and we recommended that the American government send over fire attachés to join the London Embassy. A few days later Mayor LaGuardia decided to send over three firemen from New York to study and observe. Those three New Yorkers held a press conference in London and completely won over the London press. One of them told the reporters: "They don't speak English so good in the Bronx."

Early the next morning, just after daybreak, I walked through Berkeley Square, littered with glass, and on into Bond Street and to Regent Street. There was so much shattered glass scattered about that they looked like streets in New York after a light snowfall. It was early in the morning and burglar alarms were ringing—in every direction they had been started by concussion. It gave an odd and rather silly touch to the scene, for no one in London was concerned in the least about anything so trivial as burglars. There were furs and gardenias in shops with no windows. I walked on into St. James's Park. All was quiet there now. There were chrysanthem-

mums, and falling leaves from sycamore trees, and ducks swimming in the pond. There was smoke in the air, making London smell like Washington in the autumn when woods are burning in Virginia. It was a beautiful, peaceful scene, but a policeman rushed up telling me to get out of the park in a hurry; an unexploded bomb had just been discovered.

I liked to walk through London during lulls between the raids. The long autumn days continued, the sun still shining, week after week—long fogless days that were unheard of. I liked to walk through the parks late in the evening, just as the sun was setting, leaving you with a feeling of being far away in the north. I liked the deep stillness of the late London afternoons—the last hour before the siren. London at that time seemed to be resting; starlings would chatter in the thickets, and the wild water birds would settle for the night. Big Ben, off in the distance, would chime the quarter-hours and overhead low watery English clouds would fly by. Beyond the trees were the outlines of noble grey buildings, some of them only shells, but more magnificent in their ruin than they had ever been before the Germans had bombed them. There was a touch of Athens and Rome about London at that moment—the same kind of indestructibility that hovered about the Acropolis and the Colosseum. There was that same feeling too of the continuity of everything, of the long life of the world as a flowing river. You took long looks at monuments, knowing they might not be there tomorrow. They might exist only in your own mind, as mental visions, and you felt you had to store your mind with pictures, with scenes to remember. You realized how slight was the hold of man on even the centre of civilization, how near was night, how

uncertain was the hand that worked bomb sights and followed radio beams. You were astonished by the speed with which ruin could come upon you; the greatest streets in the world in twenty-four hours could look as abandoned as Persepolis.

Walking in the park, I would think of Andrew Carnegie and Cecil Rhodes—how sure they had been of the unchangingness of time, making wills to last through centuries. Never again would we take our world for certain. The ruin of London humbled you, made you more grateful for those who had fought battles for you. I remember one day recalling that Mrs. Carrie Chapman Catt, talking years before about Gettysburg, had said a part of original America had died on that battlefield for ever. Those were the days when peace was all that mattered, and in those days I had agreed with Mrs. Catt. But now I knew that a part of original America had not died—a part of original America had survived because of that battle. It was not individual life that mattered in times of emergency, it was individual spirit.

I would walk on, and far off in south London I would hear the sirens starting, and over the whole of the city the sound would spread in waves as borough after borough took up the signal. I would walk faster and faster, wanting to be with people, for during this common danger you found it was better not to be alone.



CHAPTER XI

Maude was bombed out and lost all she had. She said it did not matter, nothing mattered but beating Hitler. The waiter lost his sister, one of the men who worked at the Western Union office was injured in a raid, and Johnny Johnstone at the Commercial Cable office left his mother-in-law's dinner table and went out into the garden and gathered parts of a crashed airman in a basket. A bomb being removed by the bomb-disposal squad exploded as a lorry was passing the Trocadero restaurant, and the leg of a man was hurled through a glass window into the dining-room. In Bloomsbury I heard an artist tell of his father's death; his father had died a natural death in bed, and he had taken the body to an undertaker's; when he had gone back there the next day, he had found nothing but a hole in the ground. A bomb hit the Bank of England, another came down through the ceiling of St. Paul's, piercing the inscription: "For God So Loved the World. . . ." Bedford Square was hit outside Lady Oxford's window, bombs fell on the Zoo. My room was bombed at the Waldorf and I moved to the

front of the hotel. And there came the day when the doorman did not show up for work. No trace of him was ever found, so we decided he must have been hit by a bomb on his way home—he must have been demolished. Hilde Marchant was ordered out of her flat because of a time bomb, and as she left the place for the last time, she said: "All that can be earned again." Two hundred people were bombed in a shelter, a bomb fell into the basement of St. Martin's in the Fields, another fell at the feet of Nelson. Another blasted the windows of the House of Commons, bent the sword of Richard the Lion-hearted, and damaged the superb Henry VII Chapel of the Abbey.

Night after night, bombs followed bombs.

I watched and listened to the British through all those days—their spirit held on and on, their conviction did not budge an iota. I watched them the day St. Paul's was hit—the clergy that day opened the main door, which prior to this had been opened only on state days and great days of the Church, on days when England as a nation had given thanks to God. I saw the people standing at the iron railing and silently looking at the hole in the Cathedral ceiling, and I realized then that the people of London had already given up London in their minds as a physical city. I realized then that they meant what they said when they told you it would be better to see London in ruins than to save it as the French had saved Paris. Notre Dame to these Londoners was a dead monument—a dead church in a humiliated city. London was no longer a physical city to its people; it had become a spiritual place, the city of Dr. Johnson, the city that had sent Captain Cook round the world and Captain Scott to the South Pole; it was the London of John Wesley

and of Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*, of Cardinal Newman's "Lead, Kindly Light." London lived within them.

One night I went out with the drivers of the ambulances. I took a taxicab over the Thames and up Brixton Hill in Lambeth, by the prison where Sir Oswald Mosley was in jail, to a schoolhouse that was being used as rescue headquarters for all that part of the capital.

There they were, another group of civilians, with an emergency office in full operation. They had been working night and day with little rest since the battle had started—they worked all night rushing bombed victims to hospitals, then some of them had to work throughout the day evacuating patients from the city hospitals to safer places beyond the London area.

I reached headquarters just before the first raid of the night started, and inside the schoolhouse I found one relay of men and women on duty while another relay, utterly worn out, slept on cots. Both the working and the resting were crowded together, but I was received as though I had stepped into a drawing-room. Someone came round with a cup of tea. "Will you have sugar?" I was asked, and I replied: "No, thank you," which was the polite answer that was expected of me, as sugar was on the rationed list. (You could take one cup of tea, but when you were offered a second cup, you were expected to refuse that also.)

The staff was preparing a chart for the night—every bomb that fell on the borough of Lambeth would be represented on that chart before the night had finished; they showed me the charts of other nights and I found the pattern of the bombs was a fascinating study. Evi-

dently the Germans had some idea of where they had been, as high-explosive bombs had fallen thick around railways and bridges and power stations. Incendiary bombs and time bombs had been showered over the entire area, the one to burn the borough, the other to disrupt traffic.

Soon a chauffeur arrived to take me to a sub-station in a working-class district that had been heavily assaulted. Reaching this outfit through the blackout, I found fifteen women drivers and six men waiting for a call. They were in a brick surface shelter, twelve feet by fifteen feet—a windowless place with two heavily curtained doors. It was an almost breathless place, but it was the best that could be provided at the moment and they were not complaining—they had sat in that stuffy place, waiting for calls, since the start of the Battle of London. It made me ashamed of myself to think that I had had dinner at the Dorchester Hotel.

There was a small table in the shelter, a dim light. A sergeant—a woman who before the war had been a secretary in a broker's office—was in command. Others in the room included a cockney woman who dropped every "h," a good-natured Irish woman who chattered and laughed and kept everybody cheerful. Four other girls, to pass the time, were playing Chinese chequers, which they called American chequers. They and the six men sat round the wall on automobile cushions, packed like sardines. The sergeant said some of the girls in this room would have been frightened of their own shadow at night a year before, but that now they went anywhere at any time.

At midnight I drove with one of the men to a park to

answer a ghastly call, for a shelter there had been hit—a direct hit. Soon London's volunteer army assembled about us—other ambulance-drivers, rescue workers, air-raid wardens; a mobile canteen appeared with tea. The civilians started digging in the moonlight. The moon was almost as bright as day and there were white flying clouds overhead—white clouds tinged with pink from far-away fires. An autumn wind was blowing in the trees, and as the dead were uncovered they were laid out in the shadows, all in a row. The bodies of six women, of five children, were brought out; several who were not dead were put in the ambulances and taken away. Hour after hour the rescue workers kept digging—there were others still buried. Underneath us in that park were other shelters in which hundreds of Londoners were spending this night; some of them did not even know that this particular shelter had been hit. Once when the men took out the crushed form of a child, they gave way to the most passionate expressions of bitterness. Then they were quiet again—that was the only time they showed any sign of emotion.

From the park a district ambulance leader drove me to another ambulance unit where there were twelve men and three women who had just come in from a call and were dog-tired. Two of the women and one man lay down on a blanket and fell asleep, exhausted. The third woman, who had just carried several bodies from a hospital to a morgue, was sitting in a chair knitting a sock. Two of the men told me they had lost their homes and had nothing left but the clothes they were standing in. From there I drove on back to my hotel in the awful quiet that follows the early morning all-clear. I drove back saying to myself how horrible was this war.

One day I saw a battle at noon over the centre of London. I was walking along Piccadilly and, looking up, saw a formation of Germans about five miles high, well above a bank of ragged cumulus clouds. Then I saw the Royal Air Force sweep in on them, and from the street other pedestrians and I heard the sound of English machine-guns and of German cannon. Then through the clouds we saw a big German bomber falling, breaking to pieces; it fell near Victoria Station. All about me I heard English men and women cheering. "Dirty bastards," said a newsman; "they were after the Palace again."

It was Sunday, and walking on, passing St. Martin's in the Fields, I heard the congregation singing "Onward, Christian Soldiers." The raid was still on and St. Martin's on its south side had no windows. That afternoon I went to Hyde Park to listen to the soap-box orators, who right on through the war were raising hell with the government and with the Church. There were socialists and a Communist and an atheist—the usual run of the soap-box mill—and there was an ex-maid telling what it was like to work for English ladies, and a prohibitionist who stuck to his thesis—whisky was the cause of the world's troubles. For the first time in months I went that afternoon to the movies, to see Gary Cooper in *The Westerner*. When the wild men came in and began firing off six-shooters, the London audience burst into laughter—six-shooters were nothing to those Londoners when at any moment a thousand-pound bomb might come crashing through the roof.

The house of Robert Hudson, the Minister of Agriculture, was bombed; Lord Londonderry's house—the house in which Ramsay MacDonald sold out the Labour Party in order to be able to use the parlour—was bombed;

the King's house in Piccadilly was hit—the house he had lived in when he was Duke of York. Walter Hines Page's house, two doors from the U. S. Embassy in Grosvenor Square, was hit. It was hit one day at noon just as General Mike Scanlon, the American Air Attaché, and Mrs. Scanlon were walking out of the Embassy door. Mrs. Scanlon said to the general: "There's a plane up there." The general answered: "Oh, it's one of theirs." Just then down came the bomb, and Mrs. Scanlon has been telling about that ever since: "There he was, the American Air Attaché, and he thought it was one of the British." Mrs. Scanlon also says she discovered too that her husband was no gentleman: "He dropped to the pavement faster than I could."

London women began packing bomb bags; they started going through their possessions, deciding what they had that they most cherished, and these things they put in a small suitcase in a convenient place so, when the time came to run for shelter, they could grab them. And it was at about this time that the Duke of Devonshire's butler, when asked what he thought of the battle, remarked he hadn't seen such fireworks since His Grace came of age.

A month passed, five weeks, six weeks. The leaves were falling now and the air was getting chilly; those in the city who could afford the price were buying warm shelter clothing for winter. The worst part of the battle still lay ahead and everyone knew it. Everyone knew what the winter would be like in a city that was being bombed—there would be hardship and cold and threat of illness.

London began to batten down, like a ship that had to meet a tempest.

During these nights, I went to the public shelters—to the bad ones, to the good ones, to those on the surface, and to those in basements; I went to the tubes, to the one that housed fourteen thousand people. The sights were appalling, and even to visit them was dreary, discouraging work. Even the best shelter was bad—London's sleeping-place was a sort of hell under earth. It was now that I began really to realize the toughness of the British character—they complained about conditions in the shelters and started a political campaign against Sir John Anderson, the cabinet minister who was responsible for public shelters, they raised the roof in their free press and in the House of Commons, but there was never any thought of their not enduring shelter life. It was something they had to face, so they faced it, and they did it with discipline and with order. That quality which made the British soldiers stand in line on the Dunkirk beach and wait their turn to board a ship now cropped up again in London. Londoners placed pieces of paper with their names on them in certain spaces in subway stations, and the public respected those slips of paper as shelter rights. This system which they started themselves in the shelters reminded me of Americans, in the West in the early days, staking claims. The form of the law had followed them, and I never saw nor did I ever hear of Londoners panicking or fighting for bed space in a shelter. Of course, there were individual disputes on occasion and there was spasmodic trouble. For instance, a woman appeared in court, complaining that a man in a public shelter had misbehaved; he had misbehaved to

such an extent, said she, that she had been obliged to leave the shelter, to go out into the blackout and expose herself to falling shrapnel. She thought the man ought to pay her ten pounds damages. The judge said no.

Pale-blue lights usually burned through the nights in the public shelters of London, and wardens made the rounds, keeping order. They were decent places even if they were savage. Walking into any of them, you would find people laid out in rows with just enough room to stretch—they did not even have the space corpses are given in graveyards. Early in the evening, before sleeping-time, you would see hundreds of men, women, and children there—people reading, some playing cards, babies being fed. Always I was amazed by their stoicism and cheerfulness and by the respect, even here, which they showed for one another. They seemed indifferent to physical comfort; you would have thought they had slept all their lives on cement. There would be a tremendous chatter until suddenly about eleven o'clock a quiet fell over the place and you would find yourself in the midst of a vast huddling sleeping multitude. I never got accustomed to such sights—to think that this in my lifetime could happen to the people of London. Here they were, the people who ruled a fourth of the globe; these were the people who held India and most of Africa, the people of the empire on which the sun never sets. They had been imperialistic and had exploited, they had subjugated, but down in the tubes of London they were demonstrating that they could take the same sort of punishment they had handed out. These were the people who for a thousand years also had fought for freedom of conscience and speech, for independence of organization; and once they had gained a right, they

had never let it go. They were a tough generation of Englishmen and I admired them in the shelters. They had Elizabethan fire in their guts.

Steadily the days grew shorter, the raids longer.

I went to Cliveden when Lord Lothian was there and listened to him talk of a world to be controlled by America and Great Britain, with flights of airplanes based on England, South Africa and Australia. He looked very tired but not ill, and when he talked, the area of the world seemed to shrink. One day I listened to Sir Neville Henderson, a man who had had his moment and after that had begun to live in the past. One day I went to see H. G. Wells, who said I was not to quote him, that if I quoted him he would deny every word, for there could be no conversation if private talk were published. He was interesting, but I do not remember now what it was he said—why should anyone remember anything if you know you cannot tell it?

One night we were bombed at dinner. Dick Law and Lord Cranborne and Charles Peake and some other friends and I were just sitting down at the Travellers Club when the Carlton Club, two doors away, was smashed by a high explosive. Gladstone fell off the wall and we ducked to the floor. When we found it was the Carlton that had been hit—the Carlton, which for years had been the headquarters of the Conservative Party—Dick Law said to us: “The end of an era.” Incendiary bombs fell on the Travellers and in the streets outside and about that entire area of London that evening, so we went out and started to work fighting them with sand. Once when we heard a high explosive coming down, we crouched in the doorway of a bank and lay there so long that a soldier inquired: “Anybody hurt?”

As the nights followed the nights, I began to dread to see dark come. I was tired, so one Saturday I left London and its bombs and went far away into rural England, into the Shropshire country, with Jim Thomas, who sat for that district in the House of Commons. Jim wanted to visit his voters. Using our last gasoline rations for the month, we made our way through a section of country where farmers were ploughing the land with tractors; we saw farmers sowing winter grain, planting patches of cabbage, picking cider apples. We passed barricaded roads, saw English planes on security patrol, passed detachments of the army on manœuvres, saw whole hillsides turning autumn red and yellow—the hillsides of Wordsworth. After driving most of the afternoon we reached Hereford, in Jim's constituency, and as we had just arrived from besieged London we—to our complete surprise—found ourselves spoken to as heroes. This kind of thing had never happened to either of us before, and I must confess we did nothing to shatter the role. I told about a few personal bombs and then sat back and let Jim talk, for, after all, this was his district, these people were his voters. Jim went on to his office to interview constituents: a Tory squire complained if the government ploughed up any more of his pasture land he would have to go out of the bloody cattle business; a Polish airman wanted to transfer to the British Air Force; a boy asked Jim to help get his mother and father out of prison—they had been jailed as Fascists; a mother complained that allotments made to her by her sons in the army were not arriving; a war widow came in to ask advice—she had found that her husband had had an earlier wife who also was claiming his pension.

We spent that night at Jim's house, a former lodge-

keeper's cottage at the gateway to a manor. The night was still and silent and starry, without a single German. Next morning we went to a very tiny Saxon church which had been supported largely by the family at the manor. The gardener from the manor pumped an old-fashioned organ which was played by the vicar's wife. The daughter of the manor and the butler sang a duet, and the carpenter passed the collection plate. The vicar preached on courage. Hanging in the church were American flags and the flags of Britain's other allies in the other war—Italy excepted. The Italian flag had been removed when King George had revoked the Italian King's membership in the Order of the Garter.

We had dinner that day at the manorhouse—a historic meal for the people of the manor, as that was their last dinner there. The family had sold the place to the Catholic Church and on the next day nuns were moving in. The family could no longer afford to live in its accustomed style. The daughter of the house explained to me that the estate, during this generation, had belonged to her brother, who now was an officer in the army in Egypt. The house had no mistress, as her brother had married a movie actress, who on divorcing him had gone back to Hollywood, taking the family diamonds and tiara. What sort of home could a Hollywood actress make of a house that had belonged to Wordsworth?

We went through the house—one of those English places that had grown with time, begun in the twelfth century, added to during the reigns of Elizabeth and Queen Anne and Edward VII. It was filled with a magnificent accumulation of ages. The governess, who had stayed on after the children had grown up, told us that once, when the house had been open during a charity

fête, two Americans had come there and one had asked the present heir's mother if money could buy the house. The lady had replied no. The other American then had asked: "Could love buy it?"

Everyone was trying to be cheerful for this last meal, but it was a sad occasion. The gardener told us he could have gone to Canada years before, but he had stayed on out of loyalty to the family and to the garden. The daughter of the house told us she did not mind for herself—she belonged to a new English era and had a husband of her own and was settled. The ones she felt sorry for, she said, were the servants.

The dinner was served in great style—soup and wine and a midget roast, all that the ration would allow, and Brussels sprouts and potatoes and pudding. During the meal the daughter talked of having been in Bayreuth once for a performance of *Parsifal*. She had sat only a few feet from Hitler. She said that if she had known then what she afterwards was to know, she would have shot him.

Rested, we drove the next morning back to London—ready again for raids.



CHAPTER XII

One day about this time Helen Kirkpatrick and I decided to leave London for a time to make a tour of the great industrial cities of the Midlands. Helen and Erika Mann drove one morning to Coventry, and on the next day to Birmingham, where I joined them. Instead of visiting cathedrals, we wanted to see factories—to see British workers in the midst of the war, to see planes and guns and ammunition coming from British assembly lines.

I left London from Paddington Station on a train crowded with business men and soldiers and sailors and airmen. We had to slow down several times because of air raids, but arrived only half an hour late—not bad at all—but darkness had fallen and it gave me a ghostly feeling to land in blackout in a city where I had never been, especially as the sirens started just as we reached the station, and no one ever feels comfortable in a railway station in the midst of an air battle. My uneasiness was increased still more when I found that the Queen's Hotel, where I was to stay, adjoined the station. Stepping into

the Queen's, I found the hotel staff mobilizing for attack—kerosene lanterns had been lit in hallways in case the electricity failed, and there were buckets of sand and shovels on every floor for use against incendiary bombs. To my surprise, I found the entire London Philharmonic Orchestra in the Queen's lobby and with them Basil Cameron, who once conducted the orchestra in Seattle. The orchestra, he explained, had been touring the provinces since the blitz had become so intense in London. The musicians were doing very well, too, he went on, saying they gave two programs a day—one beginning at three thirty and ending at five forty-five and another beginning at six o'clock and ending at eight fifteen. That allowed the public time to get home, get a bite to eat, and make for the shelters ahead of the sirens.

Tired, I turned in, putting my shoes outside the door in the British fashion, and also hanging a sign over the door-knob—a sign which I found in the room, which said: "Do not disturb unless very dangerous." About midnight I was waked—not by the air-raid wardens, but by two very polite policemen who wished to stamp my credentials.

Next morning we went to the Ministry of Information office and explained we should like to see factories; we told them which factories, we were specific, and they said O.K. All that day and the next we talked to employers and employees and made the rounds of industrial plants. These were women workers as well as men, and many of the women told us they had rather work in a factory than keep house. Working in a factory in war-time, they said, gave them a feeling of doing something direct to help beat Hitler. They were getting time and

a half for overtime and some of them were working in two shifts—the day shift from eight in the morning to seven thirty at night, the night shift from seven thirty to eight, Saturday included and half of Sunday.

Up and down assembly lines we walked and talked. Neither Helen nor I knew anything about the process that was in progress—that did not interest us—what we wanted to investigate was the temper and spirit of the workers. We soon were satisfied by what we saw and heard in Birmingham—the folks in the factories were a hundred per cent for this war; it *was* freedom they were fighting for; there was not a doubt. We saw thousands of British men and women busy at machines that had been made in Cincinnati, Akron, Rockford, Milwaukee, and Hartford, and it was a thrilling sight—to see British workers drawing on American industry in their fight to increase production.

Birmingham at that time had had two bad raids—thirty factories had been hit, three had been put out of commission. It was a town like Pittsburgh, a great grey city with a million people—a new city, grasping for culture. Older than Dallas and Akron but, as an industrial city, not so old as St. Louis or Detroit, a city of the century of mechanization. Like Manchester, Birmingham up until the Battle of London had always regarded the British capital as a soft southern city, luxurious and effete. But since the blitzkrieg Birmingham had discovered London for what it was. Everywhere in the city, people were expressing pride and admiration for the capital. Weeks later, when Birmingham and Manchester were raided heavily in their turn, London was to find that the cities of the Midlands had hearts and souls also; there was to

be a new understanding between these centres of British power. Culture and governing and work were to find their equal status.

We saw the men and women in Birmingham making some of the most beautiful bullets in existence, bullets so precise and beautiful that they would tempt institutions like the Museum of Modern Art to put them on exhibition. We saw workers making machine-guns and cannon and marine mines that were almost human in the mystery of their being. All was polished brass and bronze and shining metal. We spoke of this mechanical beauty to these Englishmen and found that they responded; they talked about how much more time the world spent on destruction than it did on construction, how much more it devoted its energy to war than to peace. Discussing socialism one noon hour, one worker said to us: "Look at Sweden—the most civilized, social country in the world, and yet when the time came for it to fight for everything that it stood for, it refused to fight." These British workers were for better hours and better wages and more education, but they were worried about qualities that turned a country soft. Democracy somehow must become more stern; somehow the better life must at the same time become a harder life. Then they dismissed this sort of talk. "First we must win this war."

After working all that first day, Helen and Erika and I went to see the last half of *Gone with the Wind*. The burning of Atlanta in that moving picture reminded us of that first Saturday night in London; it was too close to us for comfort. Just after Atlanta was burned on the screen, we heard the sirens of Birmingham sounding, and immediately afterwards an announcement was

flashed on the curtain—those wishing to leave the theatre might do so, but *Gone with the Wind* would continue.

We drove through the Midlands on four- and six-lane asphalt highways that were standing up under fleets of heavy trucks and military convoys. The car we were using was a small English Ford that made forty miles to a gallon of forty-cent gasoline—sometimes it seemed to drive on air. The country we were passing through was as heavily populated as New Jersey; on both sides of us, among green English fields, were factories—literally hundreds of them, their chimneys alive with smoke. We drove for miles through this industrial area, and the impression it gave us was of the difficulty of destroying a country from the sky, especially when that country has its own fighter squadrons, always ready to attack. The factories of England were still producing.

In the afternoon we came into Manchester, to find again that our hotel was just across the street from a station. From the window in my room I could see about four acres of glass roofing, and it gave me the creeps, but the night turned out to be a quiet one—nothing occurred. During the next day we went to a munitions plant where no aliens before us had ever been admitted. In Manchester itself they opened the strangers' gallery of the cotton exchange for us for the first time since the war. Whatever we wanted to see we were permitted to see—the British had adopted a policy of letting Americans see for themselves, knowing that of one thing they could be certain: we would find British morale unshaken. We found that the cotton industry, which causes the world so much trouble, was in a period of doldrums after having flour-

ished during the earlier days of the war. After losing the French market the cotton-manufacturers had had a hard time, but now they were on a forty-hour schedule again, making uniforms for the Home Guard and for the British armies in Egypt.

George Tait, the American consul in Manchester, took us to see the czar of the cotton industry, a British industrialist who talked to us about credit and the meaning of money. He told us that after this war, nations must not permit money to remain the rigid thing it had been in the past; never again must money be allowed to interfere with people's needs and their freedom. He spoke of the nationalization of nations' purchasing power, of banding industries together to work within a frame of their own, within the greater frame of the nation. He spoke of the necessity of national and international planning; there had been too much chaos in competition, too much waste.

Late in the afternoon, in the Town Hall of Manchester, we attended a session of the conscientious objectors' tribunal. Three judges sat in judgment, and to each objector they announced that they had two things to decide: first if the objector had any conscience, and second if that conscience was honest.

A hard-faced, smirking youth appeared, charged with refusing to go to sea on a merchant vessel as a wireless operator. The youth said it was an act of war and he refused to take part in an act of war. One judge, looking down, asked the boy if there were any circumstance in which he would defend his country. The boy said there was none, he did not believe in defence. "You are a useless citizen," pronounced the judge. "You are willing to eat food, but you are unwilling to help bring it in—

you are a mouth to feed. You are useless to England." The judge raised his tone of voice. "Why don't you leave the country?" the judge inquired. "Where would I go," replied the boy. "Perhaps to America," said the judge. "Maybe I would be useless to America too," answered the boy. Impatiently the judges conferred; then the jurist who had done the questioning read their decision: "You are ordered to work on the land for the duration of the war."

Another objector was called—a bony, hungry-faced man. His objection was based on religion. "You are ordered to work on the land. . . ."

So the cases moved along.

Finally one of the judges read aloud a petition from an objector who had changed his mind and did not wish to object. The judge noted that the objector at the time of his objection had been making two pounds a week as a clerk, but that since changing his mind he had become an air-raid warden at three pounds ten a week. The ruling of the court in this case was that anyone who had a conscience at two pounds a week must also have one at three pounds ten. "Ordered to work on the land. . . ."

We drove on into Liverpool—huge, sooty, dirty Liverpool, tough and full of slums and poverty; and here as in Manchester and Birmingham we found people full of faith and courage. "I won't buy a new coat this winter," said a waitress to us in a restaurant. "What does it matter what we wear? Who cares what we look like, so long as we beat Hitler?"

"How does our bombing compare with London's?" the doorman inquired at the Adelphi, where we stopped

(the Adelphi was across the street from the station). "Is London's bombing worse than ours?" By this time, we knew enough never to tell any Englishman that his town had been outbombed anywhere; so we evaded the question with a question: "You've had a lot of raiding, haven't you?" With pride, he replied: "Had a hundred and forty-five—Jerry started on us a month before he started banging London." He then named three docks that had been damaged and a fourth near which a bomb had fallen. "Then they got the Custom House—got it right on the top—but it was an old building, and a lot of folks had been saying for fifty years it ought to be torn down; the street there's been needing widening since any of us can remember."

In the lift the elevator boy said: "They've damaged our new Cathedral—broke some of the windows—but we're going on with the construction just the same." As he took our suitcases he said: "It's appalling how bad the Germans shoot—you wouldn't believe anybody could be so unfortunate."

All that afternoon we drove about the city—saw the damaged Cathedral, saw warehouses that had been demolished, smashed railway lines, bombed churches, public houses, hospitals, parochial halls, homes, factories. We saw more ships than we had ever seen anywhere in any port in the world; there were hundreds of them, so crowded at docks, loading and unloading, that it seemed to us a bomb could hardly fail to hit something. A fleet of trucks moved by, heading toward a huge dock, and stamped on each of these trucks was "Anglo-Egyptian Expedition." A soldier in a pub said to us: "I'm on my way to a country where there's never any fog—nothing but sunshine."

Late that afternoon at the hotel a maid came into my room to adjust the curtains for the blackout. "Night before last," she said, "two air-raid wardens and a priest were killed when a bomb fell just behind the hotel. It was a terrible night and the housekeeper got the wind up. The housekeeper said to me: 'Nothing seems to frighten you, Miss McGillicuddy,' and I said to her: 'What's the use to bother, Miss O'Reilly? Either the bomb has your name on it or it hasn't.'"

Fixing the curtains so that no light could possibly show into the street, Miss McGillicuddy then switched herself into the hall.

There was a string orchestra in the dining-room that evening, and there were waiters, most of them old men, in boiled shirts and tails, who served us a simple rationed dinner with the accustomed elegance of the Adelphi. The dining-room was crowded with lean, weather-beaten Englishmen—the kind of Britishers you see at the polo club in Manila, at the Royal Yacht Club in Bombay, at the Hong Kong Hotel, about the bar at the Cathay in Shanghai. Outside in the lobby there were piles of luggage. We looked at several labels on trunks and read: "Early November Sailing."

England still held open her doorway to the outside world.

We went to lunch next day with the Consul General of the United States, a kindly, friendly man, very lonely without his wife and daughter, who had been sent home in July by the American government. He took us from his office, which had lost twelve hundred dollars' worth of windows, to a little restaurant in a side street, and there we had soup and apple pie and coffee with sugar that he had brought along—granulated sugar from home.

The Consul General said to us: "Do you know what I do sometimes during these long evenings? I peel apples and put up jelly."

Then he told us about Harvey Hiott, a boy from Charleston, South Carolina, who was in Liverpool prison through no fault of his own. In the old days on the San Francisco waterfront, the Consul General said, boys like Harvey got slugged over the head and shanghaied; now shanghaiing was done more subtly, sea captains were more suave.

In August 1939 a Danish ship put into Charleston and, needing an extra sailor, the skipper went ashore and said to a nineteen-year-old fellow: "How would you like to make a three-week trip to Santo Domingo and back to Charleston?" It sounded to Harvey like a wonderful way to round out the summer—he would be back in time for school. The skipper said he needed no papers, so Harvey went home, got some clothes, came back, and sailed away. The ship did not return to Charleston from Santo Domingo, however; it sailed to Jamaica, and it did not return to Charleston from there, either—it went to Spain. Then it touched at French ports and went to Africa and came back to Spain and on to Ireland. Finally a year later it put into Liverpool and Harvey went ashore and asked the Consul General what should he do.

"He seemed a fine boy," said the Consul General. "He had no passport, but there was no doubt about his being American—nobody but a Charlestonian could have that accent—so I told him to jump the ship, no matter what happened."

Harvey jumped and soon afterwards was arrested by the British as a deserter—Danish ships by that time had been commandeered by England. The Consul General

went to court with Harvey and got that charge quashed, testifying that Harvey was in Liverpool through no choice of his own, that he had been aboard the ship for a year under duress. Next the British government filed an alien deportation order against Harvey, and it was at that point that Harvey got hopelessly tied up in international red tape. For Harvey was an American, and the American Neutrality Act would not permit Americans under any circumstances to sail from England in anything but an American vessel—and there were no American vessels; the last one had left Galway in July. Under American law he could not leave, and under British law he could not stay. So he was put into Liverpool prison, and the prison had been bombed and six prisoners had been killed. The Consul General asked Helen and me to take up Harvey's case in our papers; he asked us to go and see him, and if we were refused entry, to say we had been sent by the Consul General of the United States.

Helen and I went out and bought long woollen underwear, a woollen shirt and socks and some fruit and candy and went to the prison, a huge damp cold kind of dungeon. Harvey came out and talked to us through a glass window. We were the first people he had seen in three weeks; we brought him the first word he had had from the outside in that length of time. Grinning at us, he said: "I never thought I'd land up in a foreign country in jail."

"We'll get you out," said Helen.

"Do you know who they've got me in here with?" Harvey asked. "They've got me in with a lot of fifth communists."

In London we went to the Embassy and told Joe Kennedy about Harvey. Joe got Herbert Morrison, the

Home Secretary, on the telephone, and five hours later, in Liverpool, Harvey was out. The Ambassador brought him to London, and the Lytel family, an American family in the advertising business in London, took him to their farm in Surrey. Harvey was out of jail, but he still was three thousand miles from Charleston.

We drove back to London from Liverpool through rain and fog and sunshine, and on the way we picked up a Canadian airman, hitch-hiking his way to an airdrome from Chester. We passed green English fields and kept asking our way from town to town along the unmarked highways. Once the Canadian said: "England has a lot of scenery to be so small."

In town after town, as we asked directions, we were told by people on the streets: "I don't know the way, I'm a stranger here myself." These were evacuees from London and what they said was true, they no more knew where they were than we did. But we soon found out, if we hesitated a moment, they would begin to tell us about their bombs—about the bombs that had fallen on Limehouse and Stepney and on Bethnal Green.

I remember in one place listening to a group of them talking. "Dearie," said a cockney, "my Aunt Fanny was bombed clear across her flat." "Dear Gawd," responded a second cockney, immediately telling a bomb story of her own, "my uncle that's ninety-two was bombed right out of his bed and his false teeth that was in a water jar on the table fell on the floor and broke." "Blime me," said the first cockney.

Those women, like everyone else in England who had been under bombing, had a sense of having lived up to

duty. All of them were heroes, and they knew it; this knowledge gave their very faces a glow.

On that journey we passed through Stratford-on-Avon without stopping—we hadn't the time. In London we found the raids had continued. Kensington Palace had been hit—Kensington, where Queen Mary had been born, where Princess Victoria had been waked up one night to be told she was Queen of England. Bombs had fallen in the Temple, on the north bastion of the Tower of London. There were signs in beauty-shop windows: "Does your face have that shelter look?" On fences there were government notices: "Use coal sparingly. Be glad of any coal. Don't worry about the kind. Your merchant will supply the best he can. Lay one fire. Light it late." In a chemist's shop there was a sign: "Are you worried? All this work at home, all this loss of sleep, all those extra worries—worries about food, worries about separation from HIM, worries about making ends meet. There's a step wise women are taking to repair this damage. They are taking Tonic."

Frank Kent, Jr., of the *Baltimore Sun* had been told by a doctor of West End hospital about a soldier and a girl who had been brought in dead one night from Hyde Park. The doctor had said to Frank: "Under the circumstances, I didn't know whether to be ashamed or proud of my countrymen." Chelsea Hospital had been hit—a building which Julian Huxley had considered, along with St. Martin's in the Fields, to be the finest building in London. Holland House had been hit, Crewe House. . . .

Soon after returning from Liverpool, I went to tea in Great North Street with Sibyl Colfax and Mrs. Walter Elliott. They and their four maids and two longshore-

men and an Irish handyman and his wife were the only residents left in that street. Sibyl said: "The ten of us sleep in a public shelter behind the library for the blind—all ten of us in a row." She asked me if I would have sugar in my tea and I of course said: "No." "Our immediate problem," she continued, "is snoring. The snoring of one of the longshoremen is of such calibre that the only time we can hear the booming of the London barrage is during the lull between the intake and outgo of the snore."

Mrs. Elliott began to laugh. "Last night," said she, "the snoring was so terrific that I nudged the Irishman's wife, who nudged the longshoreman who was doing the snoring. 'Quiet,' she shouted. The longshoreman, rousing up, asked: 'Why quiet?' 'You're snoring,' said the Irishman's wife. 'Well,' said the longshoreman, 'this ain't Buckingham Palace.' 'I didn't say it was Buckingham Palace,' replied the Irishman's wife. The longshoreman slept again and almost immediately began again to snore."

"At that point," interrupted Sibyl, "I nudged the second longshoreman and said to him: 'Can't you turn your friend on his side?'"

Sibyl and Mrs. Elliott roared with laughter.

Surprised, I asked them: "You two sleep in a public shelter?"

"Of course," they replied.

"What do you sleep on?"

"On blankets on cement."

Mrs. Elliott then explained: "We could go to the country—I could close my town house, but I should still have to pay rent on it, and I can't afford to pay rent both in town and in the country and still be able to take my maids

with me. I don't think I have the right, under those circumstances, to leave the maids behind. So I have decided to stay here. The maids have been with me for many years."

From Sibyl's house I went to see Mrs. Arthur Grenfell, who took me to Belgravia, where some bombed families from the East End had been lodged by the Y.W.C.A. in some of London's biggest mansions. At the London house of the Viceroy of India we rang the bell and were met by one of the new tenants—the wife of a brewery worker from Stepney and mother of eleven. She led us through a lofty hall with marble floor into an immense drawing-room which had ceilings twenty feet high. "Cripes, ain't it lovely?" said the new tenant. "It's just like the cinema." On the next floor we found the family of a teamster huddled about a small coal fire in a room so huge that one of the teamster's sons remarked: "It's like living in a skating rink."

Across the hall in another drawing-room, with satin wall-coverings and marble mantelpieces, were three entire families—gathered in the one room to keep each other company. Some of them were playing cards and there was a tea-kettle boiling on a fire. An old woman in a formal black dress, trimmed with braid, said: "We're glad of any kind of a home, even if it is a palace." I asked them where they slept, and the old lady replied: "We all go below when the sirens sound, and some of us sleep in the wine cellars and some sleep in the china and silver closets. I sleep in a linen closet and it's very cozy and safe indeed."

The wife of a general was calling on a family in another room. She had brought them some blankets, and the mother of that family had offered her all that she

had to give in return—a souvenir piece of shrapnel. “Won’t you take it, lovey?” we heard her say. “We’d like for you to have it.”

We called at another home in the square—a house that belonged to an English woman with a famous name. A woman from Stepney met us there at the door and took us into another drawing-room—this one with beautiful mirrors and deep velvet carpets. “I’m worried about these carpets,” the woman said to us, “I worry about the wear and tear nine children will give them, but I will do my best, and I’ll Hooverize them every day.”

Outside in the street Mrs. Grenfell said to me: “I don’t care what happens to those carpets—the woman who owns that house skipped off to America almost the day war was declared. I don’t care in the slightest about her carpets.”

Late in the afternoon I walked home through central London, stopping, as so many in the city did during those days, for a few minutes in Westminster Abbey. Two tremendous white candles still burned in the six-foot chrome candlesticks at the grave of the Unknown Warrior. Shafts of light were streaming in through the broken stained-glass windows, and at the base of a column in the west nave there were flowers wilting over the new tomb of Neville Chamberlain.

West of the choir a temporary altar had been set up—this nave was the only part of the Abbey still in use. All the rest was closed. The Henry VII Chapel at the east end was without a single pane of glass. I watched men and women at prayer; others sat in silence, looking. They cherished the Abbey, they seemed to wish to make as much use of it as they could while it still was with them.

It was night when I left—it was night and the sirens

had sounded, and I started out, walking through the darkness. The battle itself had not yet developed and, for the time being, the city was still and old-looking and beautiful. In the dim light of the night it was without its battle scars—it still was magnificent London against a background of searchlights and flares. I navigated through this part of the city by my sense of direction and by keeping in mind what streets had been roped off and closed to traffic. Before I reached the hotel, the gun barrage had begun. The raid was in progress.



CHAPTER XIII

I went to Glasgow and Edinburgh about this time to see how the people in Scotland were reacting to the war. I had a berth on one of the famous night trains of Britain—on a train that was due to leave Euston about half past eight. As it was often difficult to get a taxicab after the siren had sounded, I went to the station at about half past six and ate there and then went out onto the platform to wait. A raid was in progress and I heard Germans above us, and the guns going. As the station was such a vulnerable target, we waited on the platform in total darkness—not a light was showing in the station, not even traffic lights on the tracks. We were in such deep blackness that two people stepped off the platform into space. One was a soldier, the other a civilian. We pulled them up again—neither was injured.

The train, when it finally left at nine thirty, was crowded mostly with soldiers, many of whom were on their way to Scotland for their first home leave in ten months. That night on that train there was a lot of singing of Scottish songs in Bing Crosby fashion, and there

was a lot of wondering about what had happened to the Scottish girls during the boys' absence. The Scots were not disillusioned—Canadian soldiers had been in Edinburgh and Glasgow for months now, and everyone knew Canadians drew a dollar and forty cents a day. It was a dollar and forty against forty. Then there were the Poles to be thought about—the Poles also had been in Scotland, and it was something other than money that had boosted the Polish reputation. The Scot soldiers said they had heard Scottish lassies had been seen walking on Sunday afternoons with Polish soldiers who could not speak a word of English; they had heard the lassies and the Poles could not carry on even the beginning of a conversation, but that just the same the lassies had reported a wonderful time.

For several hours we travelled that night through raids, and we were hours late the next day in Glasgow. I called on local newspapermen and they took me around, showing me what damage had been done to the city—at that time, Glasgow had had practically no bombs at all. The Clydeside was a scene of tremendous activity; ships were being built, ships were sailing and arriving, the factories were working round the clock. The war had brought prosperity to Glasgow.

It had brought determination to Paddy Dollan, the Lord Provost. He was a newspaperman, as I was, and I called on him first in his newspaper office on one of the side streets in the city. Picturesque, with wiry grey hair, colourful, and a great and brilliant talker, he told me to sit down—it wasn't everyone who could walk into the private office of a great city's mayor. I sat and he told me about himself; he got no pay for the job of being Lord Provost, he got a lot of honour, a lot of trouble wished on

him, a couple of blue official lights outside his tenement house, and the free use of a Rolls-Royce limousine with a chauffeur.

"I'm a journalist," he railed at me, "and other journalists would respect me as Lord Provost if only I weren't a journalist—they'd treat me better if I were a clergyman or a business man or a brewer. Editors, and especially editors who write leading articles, are men who have no responsibility to shoulder—they are entirely without executive experience." He whirled about in a battered old chair. "Sometimes I feel I'd like to chuck the lot into prison."

"What's the trouble?" I asked him.

With exasperation he replied: "Deep shelters." Rocking back and forth in the chair, he said: "We are part of the army in this war—all of us are fighting on the battlefield, and we've got to take an army's chances; the entire civilian population must take military chances, and one of those chances is shelter. We can neither afford the time nor the materials to build a complete system of deep shelters." Pointing across the table, he added: "Sometimes I feel that if the people of Barcelona hadn't taken the time to dig such deep shelters, they would have been able to have stood. . . ." His manner changed suddenly, and he remarked: "That's a bitter topic, let's don't go into it."

Two hours later I went to see Paddy Dollan at the town hall of Glasgow. This time he was the Lord Provost, sitting in a luxurious room with a great glowing fire and fine brass andirons and a wrought bronze firescreen and deep rugs and wonderful paintings of the Highlands. He brought out a bottle of fine Scotch whisky, saying it was the finest whisky in existence—it had been given

him as a Christmas present by one of the great brewers of Scotland. "The gentleman presented me ten bottles," said the Lord Provost. "I asked him couldn't he make it two more—an even dozen, but he said no, that ten was enough; business was business."

Dollan looked through one of the huge windows—at the late cloudy and squally light of a November afternoon in the far north. There were pigeons flying and there was smoke. "I'm exasperated with experts on communal feeding," he said. "All they do is talk. Communal feeding isn't something you hold meetings about—it doesn't call for speeches. It's something you do—that's all there is to it. Why, mon alive, I grew up on communal feeding. I was born in a mining town, and when the men went on strike, the women used to get out the wash pot, and instead of using it to wash, they used it for cooking. They fed the whole town out of the wash pot—six months at a time they would feed us." He folded his hands behind his head, adding: "The trouble with Glasgow is experts—even in the shipbuilding industry Glasgow has more clerks entering things in books than it has men building ships. We've become too feminized—what we need is moral courage and willingness to work."

The Lord Provost then was silent.

I talked to the newspapermen and to men in the shipyards and to publicans and to taxi-drivers and the like. A socialist told me there was still a small group on the Clydeside—Jock McGovern's crowd—who did not support the war as wholeheartedly and as unreservedly as the rest of the British Isles. "But about the majority there is no question," he said. Others told me the same thing.

A barman said: "I'm a bit fed up myself with the publicity that's been given that song 'There'll Always Be an

England.' Ought to have a chorus in it somewhere about the bloody north." One of the boys on the papers said a lot of Scots who before the war, on principle, would not stand at public meetings for any man, not even for the King, were now standing for the King because they respected the way he had been conducting himself as a man. Everywhere Scots told me of having lost their best boys in Norway and in France; time and again they told about the rear-guard action at Calais, about the Scots who had fought and died so that England could rescue the rest of the British army. They told too about the Scots they had lost in the fishing fleets and in the merchant service and in the navy. The little island of Lewis in the Western Isles had a bigger casualty list for its population than any other part of the Empire.

A policeman told me about one of the air raids on Glasgow. "Mon," said he, "they came right in from the direction of Loch Lomond."

Back in London I found a present waiting from the Lord Provost—a copy of the poems of Bobby Burns. And back in London Ed Murrow telephoned that for old times' sake he had driven back to the haystack where he and Jimmy Sheean and I had watched the start of the Battle of London. The pub where we had stopped, he said, wasn't there any more—it was a hole in the ground and rubble. And back in London Sir Walter Monckton told me of walking through the Haymarket in the blackout and of hearing bombs coming and falling on his face in the street. A woman just ahead of him also had fallen and a few moments later, when he had gone to see if she was

all right, he had found that she had no head. Bombs had fallen in St. James's Park—into the pond where the ducks swam. St. James's Palace had lost its windows. Bombs had nicked the pediment about Epstein's statue of Rima in the W. H. Hudson bird sanctuary in the middle of Hyde Park. They had hit another of the Fifty Shilling Tailors, but no luck at the Albert Memorial—it was still standing. The London Philharmonic Orchestra was advertising a concert it intended to give in Queen's Hall despite there being no windows. Myra Hess was to play in the basement of the Royal Gallery. Stores were having sales "due to enemy action."

Bombs had fallen in Covent Garden, and at the Waldorf there was no water for the time being, so I shaved in hot water that Maude brought up in a jug, and I went to the Savoy Hotel to bathe. London was becoming like Louisville and Cincinnati and Memphis when the water in the rivers was rising.

My boss, Ralph Ingersoll, publisher of our newspaper, *PM*, arrived in London at this time, and we worked night and day while he was there; we saw cabinet ministers and labour leaders and went to official luncheons and private dinners; we went to shelters, inspected damage, went all about southern England with the airmen, visiting fighter and bomber commands. One night driving through the London blackout—there was nothing visible anywhere except the blue lighted signs labelled ARP (Air Raid Precautions), which indicate the entrance to shelters—I remember Ingersoll looking at these and saying: "The Land of Arp." I remember our having lunch with an air marshal who told us he had a plan for Ireland: he said the British army needed exercise,

so why shouldn't it be sent to Ireland with a week's rations and then be told that after that it would have to forage on the land?

I remember how enthralled Ralph was by the night raids—how he turned out the lights and drew back the curtains and watched by the hour. Watching him, I realized how much we in London already were taking for granted—how much there was there that we no longer saw. I went with him and Hilde Marchant to the shelters and remember how appalled he was as he picked his way among sleeping figures, among thousands of English men and women, huddled together in unashamed sleep, breathing foul air. I watched him grasping the realization of the price London was paying for freedom. Another night when he and I and Wing Commander Gerald Maxwell were driving into London from an air-drome, an air-raid warden rushed out to stop us, saying bombs had fallen a few yards ahead in the road so recently that no one had yet located them. We drove on slowly and soon felt the tires rolling over rubble and fragments of pavement. We stopped, and there was a crater in front of us, and on the side of the road a crushed bicycle and a dead policeman. I remember Ralph's saying: "Probably the policeman was on his way home, just as we were." Ralph wrote about those days and nights in his series in *PM* and in his book *Report on England*.

When Ralph left for America, I left for Dublin.

It was like reaching heaven to arrive in Dublin from the battleground of London. All the burden of war was lifted from you, and there was light about you and a feeling of airiness, and suddenly you were free. It was

very pleasant, but at the same time it was a profoundly disturbing experience, for you could scarcely believe your own eyes. You were constantly overwhelmed by the thought that war was only sixty minutes away by air, and that only three miles distant by sea there was the submarine threat. In that bit of peace you had a sensation of being in the vacuum which exists at the centre of the hurricane. You had time to think, and before you always loomed London—you got a much clearer perspective of London over in Dublin at that time than you did in England. You realized what price London was paying not only for Dublin's lights but for all the other lights that were turned on everywhere else in the world.

Dublin at that time was bright and gay and there was sugar in the bowl and butter on the plate and there were pitcherfuls of milk and you could even have cream. You did not have to ask the hotel clerk how many floors were above you, and you could sit in the hotel writing-room beneath a glass skylight without the slightest fear. You could go to see the Abbey Players or the actors at the Gate Theatre and there were huge balls. The Irish could not get out of Ireland at that time unless they had urgent business, so instead of going to London as formerly, they now forgathered for their pleasure in Dublin. They attended dances almost every evening and went to horse-races and hunted foxes. You would think all of that would have had a soothing effect on an American escaping from London, but, as a matter of fact, it made you very restless. You found when you were away from London, and the full moon shone, you could not keep from worrying. You worried about London and about everyone you knew in London.

Considerable red tape was involved before an Ameri-

can could get over to Dublin under the circumstances of war. Ireland was prohibited territory to Americans under the neutrality law, so I had first to get permission from the Embassy in London to go there as a journalist on news-gathering business. Then I had to get the British government's permission and after that to be O.K.'d by the Irish. Lastly I had to check out with the Bow Street police, who by this time were old friends of all Americans in London—we saw them every time we moved. You could go by plane or by boat to Dublin, but I decided on the plane as it made the trip in only a third of the time, so you had only a third as long to be frightened. Aboard the plane besides me were three English travelling salesmen who said it had taken them nearly two months to get their exit permits. We sailed over in complete comfort, but all that we saw was a grey blur and then a blue blur and then a green one, as the window-panes in our plane had been covered with paint.

It was tea-time in Dublin when we got there, and the waitress must have thought she had a starving customer on her hands, for she brought out sixteen lumps of sugar, twenty-one pats of butter, four sandwiches, a buttered muffin, a pot of coffee, a jug of cream, and a half-dozen cakes. Then as she watched me eating, she asked in an awed tone: "Are things really bad in London?"

When the sun began to set I went into the street with some other American journalists who were in Dublin—with Wally and Peggy Carroll of the United Press and Ed Angly of the New York *Herald Tribune*—and we watched the night come, we watched the lights turned on, the only lights between Moscow and New York. Just for the fun of it, we counted seventy-seven street

lights and a hundred and twenty lighted windows, and we tried to estimate how much money those lights would bring in fines in the police court in London. Back at the hotel we ate butter with potatoes and unrationed beefsteak, and for dessert we had not only fruit salad with cream but also trifle with whipped cream.

The next day was Sunday and the Irish were observing armistice services for those who had died in the last war. They held a parade down O'Connell Street—a parade that carried us right back to Tammany Hall in New York. There were a brass band and an escort of giant Irish policemen, and banners just like the flags in New York. We went to the Cathedral, where we listened to a sermon preached by an Irish priest with a voice like Cardinal O'Connell's of Boston.

Then on Monday I started out to find what the Irish were thinking. I went to the Irish press office to tell them I wanted to write some stories and that I intended to cable them from Dublin—to thrash out whatever there was to be thrashed out with the Irish censors on the spot. Then I asked them whom an American journalist should see, and the Irish answer was: "Why don't you start with the doorman at your hotel?" I accepted that suggestion and for a week I talked to the doorman, to the girl at the desk, to the bartender, to the waiters and chambermaids; branching out, I talked to policemen, taxi-drivers, cabinet members, bar-flies; and I had no trouble with the censor. Americans somehow get along by instinct with the Irish. We like them, we always have liked them. I asked them how business was and they said: "Fair"; I asked them who brought their overseas food and they said: "The British." They said they got all their tea and sugar and their petrol in British convoys,

but they added the British were not doing all that because of the beautiful blue eyes of the Irish. They said if the British should cut off their petrol, or their tea, then the Irish would say to the English: "We will not sell you our cattle." About the Irish ports which the British navy needed, they all took the stand de Valera had taken—they assumed their right to neutrality on the most unassailable moral grounds. Their right to sovereignty was involved, and I formed the conclusion that they were going to keep their sovereignty even if they lost the last shred of it. I told them I had crossed the Pacific in March on a Norwegian ship, and that on the night Finland had given in to Russia, the skipper had given a dinner and had said: "Now Norway is safe—we can go on our way as neutrals." Instantly the Irish told me the obvious conclusion I was about to draw did not follow. They told me they would never allow any foreign country to use Ireland as a base against England. They said they had a good many men in various capacities in the army and local security force, they had a few guns and a certain amount of ammunition, they had some mobile equipment and a fair supply of petrol. They would fight whoever invaded Eire, and they would keep on fighting them—they would fight in their spare time. They were beginning to worry about the shortage of raw materials for their factories, they were short of superphosphates for their farms, and the question of continuing to get coal from England was also developing into a problem. Then they talked about Ireland's freedom—the tiny little world they live in—and they went back to the Black and Tans and then there came up the question of Ulster. I told them America was devoted to Ireland, and they said they knew it. I also told them that this war was a

bigger question to America than Ireland's independence and that America was determined to help England win this war. They said they knew that too. I told them I thought America's final attitude toward the ports would be based on how direly England needed them. Then they asked me why America, which was at peace, should try to involve peaceful Ireland in a war?

They were passionate on the subject of their neutrality. When I asked them how many Germans were in Eire, they said three hundred and seventy-five, and to show how neutral they were, they then volunteered the information that Eire also had twenty-three thousand British. They said the German legation in Dublin had six employees; it formerly had had seven, but one of them had died. The British representative had nine, and David Gray, the American Minister to Eire, also had nine at his legation. I found no enmity toward the British in Ireland; on the contrary I found deep sympathy; but I found no disposition among the Irish to wish to help the English. They were quite willing to accept the protection of the British Empire, but that was as far as they intended to go—if England lost the war, they knew Germany would swallow up Eire anyhow, and if England won, then Eire could go right on being Eire, without having been bombed. Ireland had become one of those countries that expected to ask and to receive.

I came back to London discouraged about Ireland, discouraged about the Irish ever allowing the British to use their ports. However, I always trusted President Roosevelt. I still believed that perhaps he could find some solution; on many occasions before that, President Roosevelt had pulled rabbits out of hats.



CHAPTER XIV

In November the Germans flew over Coventry and started a new kind of warfare. They began a campaign to ruin England by fire. After having bombed London almost incessantly for two months and seven days, they suddenly let up in their assault on the British capital and, with all their striking-force, cut loose on Coventry in the Midlands—on a single compact target, a small city that was part of the very heart of British industrial production.

The assault was more savage than anything the British Isles had seen—probably it was the most acute, the most concentrated and vicious raid in the history of air war; it probably was worse than the German attack on Rotterdam. The destruction in Coventry was appalling, and immediately it was evident to the whole world that Britain was being threatened in an alarming and entirely new way. The Germans had switched to mass fire bombing; they were striking at the centre of England's industry.

Instantly the world wanted to know what had hap-

pened at Coventry and how had it happened. Everywhere people were asking if a city could survive such a terrific beating. Could the British prevent the Germans from concentrating on other British cities in a similar way? What was to keep the Germans from swooping down on Birmingham and Manchester and Sheffield and blasting them off the map?

The truth about Coventry was one of the most astonishing stories of the war. The Germans, in spite of all their concentration, and in spite of all their atrociousness, did not knock out a single one of Coventry's important factories. They hit houses and schools and churches and stores. They all but wiped out the centre of the city, but the bigger factories about the town escaped.

I was still in Dublin when word came through that Coventry had been blitzed, so I packed up at once and started for the airport. It was a gloomy day, and even the Irish were deeply anxious—they were shocked by all the horror; on every side you heard Irishmen expressing sympathy for the people of the city that had been blitzed. You heard them talking about the savagery of modern war—where would it end, what was in store for the world? Seventy minutes later I had crossed the Irish Sea by that same device that is causing the world so much trouble. Once again I was in England, and back there I found quietness and calm, the same sort of determination about Coventry that there had been about London.

Coventry lay not so many miles to the east, but I was unable to get there at that time. I knew no one well in Manchester, and all that I had was a railway ticket to London. I had no money, for I had been in Dublin ten

days, had paid for my hotel and my air ticket all out of the hundred dollars which was all the British permit any traveller to take to Ireland.

So I started to London—a four-hour journey—but the tracks were bombed on the way and we had to be re-routed. It took that train fourteen hours. We pulled into London at two thirty in the morning, and when I got to the Savoy (I had moved there from the Waldorf) I found that it, too, had been bombed during my absence. I got up at daylight, got money from the hotel, and started out again. This time, Whitelaw Reid of the New York *Herald Tribune* was with me. At the station we were told that travel on that line was temporarily discontinued, so we drove across London to another station and bought tickets for Leamington Spa, a town about ten miles from Coventry on the Birmingham line.

Reaching there, we tried for an hour to get a taxi-driver to drive us, but all of them either were already engaged by government officials or had run out of gasoline carrying food and clothing to Coventry from the people of Leamington Spa. Finally we found a man who said he might be able to make the journey. Being American and being so eager to get on our way, we told the man we would pay him double if only he would take us, but he did not respond. He told us what the rate was; he either would be able to take us or he wouldn't. He would have to see. Soon he came back; he could get us there, but he wouldn't be able to bring us back. All he could do would be to drop us on the outskirts—he had business back in Leamington Spa. We agreed to that and started out. Soon we arrived and out we got, and I shall not forget the feeling I had—before many hours it would be dark and we had no idea

where we would sleep, we had no idea whether we should be able to get anything to eat, we were not even certain there would be a drink of water. We had a kind of feeling of walking into a trap.

Coventry that afternoon looked like any other stricken city which I, as a reporter, have covered—like Gainesville, Georgia, after the cyclone; like Louisville in the flood. There were long lines of chartered busses and people were getting into them—silent people with suitcases and with bundles under their arms. There was the smell of smoke, and over toward the centre of the town clouds of smoke still were rising. We thought surely we would be stopped by guards, but no one stopped us, so we walked on toward three spires—Coventry's landmarks, marking the heart of the city. As we came in closer, we saw more and more houses with their windows out and with roofs damaged. Then we reached the really devastated area and began moving among soldiers clearing debris and among firemen who were still watching dying fires.

Usually when I get to a strange town I go to the local newspaper office—the newspapermen of the world belong to a common fraternity, any journalist anywhere will help another if he can. I asked an old man where we could find the newspaper office and he told us: "Gor, they got it."

Then we told him we were American journalists, and he said he would be glad to guide us wherever we liked. We asked if the Town Hall still was standing, and when he said it was, we asked him to walk with us there. On the way, we passed through narrow ancient streets, smouldering, smoking—streets that had escaped the troubles of nine hundred years until that particular

Thursday night in November of 1940. For blocks there would be nothing but ruin, and then there would be a tiny house that had not been touched; there would be a corner saloon, a grocery store with food in the window and white curtains, with a lazy cat sleeping in the sun. Soldiers were dynamiting walls, people were coming and going in a steady stream to and from the Town Hall, where rescue headquarters had been established. In front of the Town Hall we found a cluster of anxious citizens reading the long lists which contained the four hundred names of the known dead.

Near by there was a mobile canteen, and about it were tired, battleworn men and women, eating bread and stew. Nancy Tree was there with her mobile canteens. She had been working all the night before and all that day, and with her were several farmers' wives from Oxfordshire, several footmen's wives, a groom's wife, and Leonora Corbett,¹ the London actress, and the Duchess of Marlborough. Nancy had her sleeves rolled up and was dipping out stew with both hands. She said never in her life had she seen such grateful people as these

¹ Leonora Corbett is one of the most engaging persons in England. One day Prime Minister Churchill said to her: "You have very long fingernails." Leonora replied: "You have a bodyguard, Mr. Prime Minister, but these are all that I have."

One evening at Ditchley, she was punching a coal fire and a diamond bracelet dropped into the blaze. Quickly I pulled the bracelet out with a pair of tongs, but it broke into two pieces. "Do you think he fooled me?" asked Leonora. And when she decided to go to New York to raise money for Britain, she turned over half of England to get the necessary permission. Finally she took her case up with the Prime Minister and even sent word to the King. One day she said: "They tell me I'll have to leave all my jewelry in England, and that'll make things most difficult in New York for a week." Another time she joked: "I'll have luncheon with New Yorkers for a Spitfire, dinner for a bomber, and if I'm to be invited out for the week-end, it will have to be a destroyer."

bombed citizens of Coventry. One man, she said, had told her he had lost his wife, his children, and his home, and when she had given him a bowl of stew he had asked her how much he owed.

As we watched our old guide talked, telling us about the raid—"It was terrible," he kept saying, "terrible." It started just after sundown, and from then on throughout the entire night the Germans were over. Fire bombs were showered over the whole place, and there were bright flares and the firefighters were bombed with high explosives. All night the bombs and flares came down, every two or three minutes. He said all able-bodied men and women took their stations, that the old and the children had orders just to stay in the shelters and wait. He told about families he knew—who had been killed, who hadn't.

By now we had only about two hours of daylight left and we began to feel time pressing—we must get in touch with the authorities and make some sort of plans for the night, for who knew what the night would bring? Quite likely the Germans might return. Hurrying into the Town Hall, we found many people doing many things, but they were quiet and there was order. The soldiers in the hallway did not try to eject us; they merely asked us whom we wished to see. On the second floor we found the emergency office of the Ministry of Information and there on duty were Morris and Humphreys, friends of ours from the regional office of the Ministry in Birmingham. Our personal troubles from then on were over. These two men told us the whole story.

Morris told us we ought to make a quick tour of the worst sectors and return just before dark—he would see that we were driven to a near-by town for the night.

So, with that, Whitelaw and I started out by ourselves to go where we wanted to go, to see whatever we wanted to see. Nobody bothered about us; there was no supervision.

It was a shocking tour. A thousand years had gone up in a night. The fine Cathedral of St. Michael, one of the best mediæval churches of its particular type in Europe, was shattered except for the spire, which stood as it always had, a sentinel two hundred and fifty-four feet above the city. A golden rooster still pointed the direction of the wind—northeast, I remember. The clock still was running and there were pigeons cooing. It was touches of life like these in the midst of death that made air destruction seem so merciless and blind and unthinking. From the church we went on to the charred library of Coventry, to more streets that were flat as pancakes. We went across to St. Mary's Hall, a sandstone hall built by the guilds between 1394 and 1414. Lady Godiva's statue had escaped and so had Peeping Tom. Those two out of a legend somehow had survived.

We spent that night in a small, very old hotel in the town to which Mr. Morris sent us. The establishment was filled except for a room called the Queen Victoria suite. It was outfitted in mahogany and had a bed as big as a barn. Queen Victoria, the manager said, had once slept in that bed, and now it had to be ours. We were depressed from the awful horrors of the day, and after we had eaten dinner we did not feel like trying to sleep, nor did we care to sit in the parlour with the regular guests, most of whom were of the retired old-colonel sort. So we went out into the blackout and finally reached the movies.

At the beginning of the picture the management flashed a notice on the screen saying the show would continue even if Jerry were directly overhead, as the enemy probably would not be after the village—he probably would be after a bigger place.

Next morning we went back to Coventry. That was when we found that between fifteen thousand and twenty thousand of the city's sixty-five thousand buildings had been wiped out or damaged. One person in every two hundred and fifty had been killed or wounded. We saw that the normal community life of the town had been paralysed, but the British no longer estimated losses in terms of community centres—they did not talk about shops and schools being demolished; they talked in terms of damage to factories. We saw how the cities around Coventry had come to Coventry's aid, how trucks and food and blankets had streamed in from Birmingham and Leicester and Sheffield. We saw how amazingly Britain had taken to wheels, how vast fleets moved back and forth as the battle surged.

We inspected the factories and it was then that we knew that Germany had not whipped this city. We realized, too, that the German blitz had not broken the spirit of the Coventry people. The people were very tired and very sad, and momentarily they were discouraged. They would say to you: "When will it end? What is it to come to?"

But there was not the slightest indication that they intended to give up. They accepted their trouble as a challenge and there was even a fierce pride about the way they told you that Coventry could take it just the same as London. Several people told us Coventry had wanted a new civic centre for years—this would be

Coventry's chance. And the Mayor said the city already had its motto for its next war memorial: "The people met their ordeal with great courage."

We saw the emergency rescue units functioning, saw men going back to their jobs. The town that had almost been knocked flat was not stopping. The centre of the town was gone; the centre of Coventry was in even worse shape than the Isle of Dogs in London, but Coventry was by no means destroyed.

That night we returned to London with the conviction that fire bombs would not beat England. The Germans would not burn their way to victory. Incendiaries would wipe out the commercial centres of mediæval towns, as they later damaged the shopping districts in Birmingham, Manchester, Sheffield, Bristol, Cardiff, and Southampton, but British factories were safe in the more secure suburbs.

The blitzing of these towns would create an appalling problem to be tackled after the war, but this kind of warfare would not break down the city's war effort. New York could get along without Wall Street; San Francisco could fight without Market. London could fight without Cheapside, Coventry without High Street. We knew the British had no way of stopping night flying, and so long as that was the case, they could not prevent the Germans from making these concentrated attacks on city after city. City after city would be vulnerable, but fire bombs would not win the battle.

CHAPTER XV

The thirteenth week of the battle arrived and passed, the fourteenth. . . . It was December now, cold and grey, the air damp with fog, and the long northern nights were fourteen hours long. The city was hove to now, like a ship in a storm, but there was confidence and faith, bravery and courage. There were lulls in the raids, there were periods of intensity, the Germans showered London with fire bombs. Everything that can be imagined in the category of human experience happened during these short days and long December nights. A woman was touching her hair with a dash of henna one evening when a bomb fell, and by the time she got her mind back on the subject of henna her hair was a fiery shade of red. Captain Lyttleton, president of the Board of Trade, ruled that corsets were a luxury commodity and ordered their manufacture curtailed, and British women protested from end to end of the United Kingdom—they could not work without a support. Silk stockings were put on the prohibited list, lipstick and rouge began to disappear, cognac was disappearing. A nurse in a shel-

ter said to me, in the middle of a battle: "If we win this war by ourselves, the world won't be able to stand us." She laughed. And when Diana Cooper heard the British were winning in Libya she celebrated—she went to Regent Street and bought a hat, the first hat she had bought since the start of the battle. Victor Cazalet said one day he had a house in Belgrave Square that once had been worth considerable money; he hadn't even been to look at it in a month, it might not even be standing. Lady Astor told of her house in St. James's Square being ruined—she spoke as casually as she would have of the weather. And one day Jimmy MacDonald of the *New York Times* said: "Well, at last London is Europe's great city. For a long time Paris was Europe's great city, but there's no doubt about it now, London has taken the place of Paris."

We settled down to living and working on a battlefield. I went to ministries, saw officials, went into the streets and talked to people. And sometimes I had disputes with the censors. One day I got so angry with the censor attached to the Western Union cable office that I sent a message to my New York office by the Commercial Cable Company that I would never send another cable by Western Union. Then the censor at Western Union called up and said he had got up on the wrong side of the bed and was sorry, and I said I, too, had got up on the wrong side and I was sorry. Next day I sent my dispatch by Western Union. We found time and again we had to remember to be patient, we had to learn to expect delays; we had to remember we were under the tension of battle and must not let it get on our nerves merely because it never let up.

One night at eight thirty the Savoy was bombed again.

I was typing and the siren had gone, but I had paid no attention, I had become accustomed to raids, for by that time I had been through nearly five hundred of them, I had become accustomed to the banging of the guns—things going up no longer bothered me at all; but that night I heard something coming down. Instantly I was aware—a bomb had fallen into the pilings of one of the bridges over the Thames, the second one had fallen between the hotel and the Embankment. There was that split second when I said to myself that if there was a third one it would be us. The third one got us—it came down through five floors, and the hotel rose like a bird soaring, then settled down again, and I found myself in my usual place—flat on the bathroom floor with my mouth open and my fingers in my ears.

Getting up, I went into the hall to see what had happened. Two roof spotters had been killed. Soon a group of men and women came out of the elevator, all of them laughing—they had been drinking. Frank, the waiter on our floor, who also happened to be in the corridor at that time, said to me: "God damn it, those silly bastards think it's funny." Frank, up to that time, had been one of those formal, unbending English servants who said "Yes, sir," and "No, sir." I liked Frank after that explosion; we became friends.

Two land mines drifted down at the rear of Victoria Station.

Ernie Pyle of the Scripps-Howard papers, arriving in London from New York, had the terrifying experience of reaching London for the first time after nightfall; he was receiving his first experience of war in blackout. At the Savoy the doorman said to him: "They'll be here in five minutes," and Ernie asked: "Who is 'they'?"

One night Laura Grenfell and I went to dinner at Hatchett's, one of the last night-clubs still open in London. We watched young officers on leave and young girls on leave dancing. There was an airman there whose face had been badly burned; we could see the line left about his eyes by his goggles. We ate simple food and Laura talked—a time bomb had fallen in Lady Reading's garden and she had gone to try to get by the police cordon to see if she couldn't remove a valuable picture. (Laura was Lady Reading's secretary at the Women's Volunteer Services.) The policeman at first refused, but Laura finally persuaded him to let her nip in for just one minute. "Just one minute—the bomb may go off at any moment." After she had gone in and come out, the bobby asked Laura for her telephone number and promised her he would ring her up the minute the explosion took place. Laura said Lady Reading had arranged a business luncheon at her house for that day and that she had to telephone the guests to say: "Lady Reading is very sorry, but she has to call her luncheon off—there's a time bomb in the garden."

Laura told about a friend of hers, a London society girl, who was driving an ambulance. A few nights before, this girl had crawled with a man from the rescue squad under debris which fifteen men were holding up with cables—she and the man had gone in to give morphia to a woman who had been buried alive for five hours. Laura told about two boys she knew who were captains in the army. These boys had gone for a walk with their young sister. In front of Buckingham Palace the guards had drawn to attention, and the boys said it had made them feel foolish to have to stand by and let their baby sister take the salute. The reason for this, Laura said,

was that their sister was a major in the Auxiliary Territorial Service; she outranked her brothers.

One week-end I went to the country to rest. I went with Sibyl Colfax and Eve Curie and Philip Bares, the former editor in Paris. Our train was crowded and we stood most of the way. We went out through the south and east of London and the damage that we saw appalled us. Again we were reminded of how quickly desolation set in in houses that were not inhabited; houses had to have care. We saw tile roofs that had been damaged by bombs; some of them seemed to curl like silk, damaged roofs seemed to assume a pliant character. We changed trains three times, then we reached the country; we moved quickly through the green English countryside, green even in December.

We saw the farmers still ploughing, still trying to sow their fields in wheat before the hard frosts. They were preparing hundreds of acres for spring kale, quantities of which were to be planted as substitute forage for cattle, chickens, and pigs. Kale, I discovered in England, was a luxurious plant—it was something like collards are in the Carolinas. Sibyl talked about chickens; “All over England,” she said, “farmers are trying to coax hens to lay eggs, but they are having very little success. Not only is this the season of the year when English hens usually are slack in laying, but this year, because of the war, the chickens are not getting the proper food-stuffs—there is a shortage of mash and oyster shells and other ingredients which laying hens require.” Sibyl reached into a bag and brought out some knitting wool and needles. “I have a friend in the Cabinet,” she continued, “who gets only eight eggs a day from a hundred hens, but he moved his flock recently from one of his

farms which had been bombed to another." The needles began to click. "His tenant says those chickens won't lay for another twelvemonth—the tenant says it's no use trying to move chickens or anything else in an attempt to escape bombs; he says in this kind of war the goat must stay where it's tethered."

A stranger in the carriage in which Sibyl had found a seat broke into the talk. "I have a friend who lost one of his cows last week when a bomb fell in the barnyard—the cow calved prematurely and died. He says cows don't like bombs any more than people like them. Bombs frighten horses too, and they terrify dogs."

"According to the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals," said Sibyl, "cats seem to know when bombs are coming. I'm told cats take cover when a bomb is coming down, and that many cats wriggle their way to safety."

The train slowed down—we had run into a raid area.

We arrived at our host's house just before sunset and went with him to look over his chickens and cows and his barns loaded with hay. "Smell the hay," he said to us. "That's the only wealth that really counts—food here for man and beast."

All that night the Germans flew above us, high in a clear starry sky, but we did not have to bother—it was not us they were after, they were bound for London.

Just before dinner General Sikorski arrived—the Polish Premier and Commander-in-Chief, with Madame Sikorski and secretaries and aides. We ate a simple meal and that evening we all worked—we wrote letters and speeches and went for a short walk in the blackout, and we went to bed very early.

The next day was a fine winter morning with the sun

shining—a heavenly day. Then planes came over, five miles in the sky, and we heard the sound of machine-guns; a battle was in progress. Eve and I went walking, stopping at the caretaker's lodge to talk to the caretaker's wife about evacuees. "I've had them ever since the war started," she said. "I've billeted Frenchmen, Dutchmen, homeless cockneys from London—cockneys who couldn't stand the sight of trees and so much open space without any shops. I've had some odd ones, but now I've got the prize of the lot—two Poles." She liked them, she explained, but she couldn't talk to them, they spoke no English, and for the last two days they had been fussing with each other and hadn't spoken a word, even in Polish. "Coor," she said, "a remarkable pair."

Soon one of the Poles appeared, and when Eve spoke to him in his own language he burst into talk. He told her with wild gestures about his life—of escaping through Rumania, digging a hole through the wall of a detention prison, getting to Istanbul and finally to Marseille, only to learn that France had fallen; then on to Gibraltar and to Britain. The story was enthusiastic and detailed and lasted about a quarter of an hour. Then suddenly there was General Sikorski. The Pole froze.

Eve Curie finally persuaded him to tell the general about his experiences, but the Pole was so subdued that all he said was he had escaped through Rumania and made his way to England. There was no hole in the prison wall, no adventures in Istanbul—nothing.

The general, very soldierly in manner, inquired of the refugee what had been his outfit. The Pole answered. What had been his category? Category E, said the Pole. "I am glad to know it was E," said the general. E was ill health. "I was at a loss to understand how an able-

bodied Pole could be in England and not be in the Polish army." Very stern and yet friendly, the general admonished the Pole to remember he represented Poland, and his conduct would deflect or reflect upon Poland. "Yes, sir," said the refugee, saluting.

After that we walked along a narrow road, and the general talked about his soldiers—about their discipline and their spirit, his army of thirty thousand men in England, his eight thousand airmen, one squadron of which had shot down more Germans from England than any squadron in the Royal Air Force. Eve talked about that squadron—she had been to see those men. She told how intuitively the Poles worked with English fliers, how the Poles memorize radio signals, how they learned to repeat by rote the words: "I am a Pole, I am in the Royal Air Force"—a precaution to save them in case they should have to bail out over England. Eve said recently a Pole had had to jump over a south English county. "Evidently," she said, "his phrases worked, for three days later he showed up at the airdrome with three boxes of chocolates and a couple of cakes."

Back again at the house, General Sikorski retired to continue his work. In the living-room, about a bright fire, Sibyl knitted, Eve wrote letters, Philip Bares read. Our host played Chopin, and I read Alice Duer Miller's *White Cliffs*, her poem about how the spirits of America and Britain interplay, agreeing and for ever disagreeing—how happy and troubled are our ways.

The piano music flowed beautifully—the exquisite Preludes. Then high overhead we again heard the sound of machine-guns. Once again we were mixed up between Chopin and Messerschmitts.

That afternoon I drove into London with the Sikorskis

and the secretaries, and on the way I tried to tell them the story about the University of Georgia football team playing the Fordham football team, the Georgia boys saying: "We're going to beat hell out of you damn Yankees," and the Fordham boys saying to their coach, during halves: "Why do they keep talking about the damned Yankees—we're for the Giants ourselves."

I had to explain what the University of Georgia was and what Fordham was, about how the boys at Georgia were from the old South and the Fordham boys were from old Poland. Then I had to explain why Georgia boys would be calling Fordham boys damned Yankees, and then I had to explain about the Yankees who weren't damned Yankees, and who the Giants were.

General Sikorski said: "Oh."

The Germans were bombing Birmingham now and Manchester and Sheffield and Southampton and Bristol and Cardiff; they were more or less leaving London alone. London worried about each of these cities as one after another of them had to meet the ordeal. "I'd rather they'd keep on after us," Frank, the waiter at the Savoy, said. "We know what to do now and how to take care of ourselves—I'd rather hear the bombs falling on London than to worry about what other place is getting it."

Each of these cities had London's sympathy, but London had already set the standard—each of these cities was determined to take whatever punishment was coming to it, to stand up to battle in the manner of London. Stories of heroism poured into Whitehall and Fleet Street from these cities. The whole of Britain was thrilled by the messages in Bristol which were posted

on the streets addressed simply: "Citizens of Bristol." In the cities of England men and women had almost forgotten the power of that old English noun: "citizens." They had not used it for years, for when they spoke of themselves they had usually used the word "townspeople." But on the morning after the Bristol blitz there it was again—"citizens" in its complete and original power.

A city in Britain had once again become a community of people, a city was no longer just a place. People once again had come to count as people, and they were united and there was no mistrust during these battles. England at this time made me think of America when all the banks were closed—as that was our finest hour, so now this was Great Britain's, and they had discovered that all they had to fear was fear itself. The battle was not so bad as the dread of battle.

There was a new understanding on this island. Cities that formerly had competed with one another for factory sites and for commerce were now going to the help of one another with all their resources. England during this emergency had become a single community, and London and Glasgow and even Dublin now found time to talk about such little people as Joan Simpson, who was fourteen and lived in Southampton, about Mrs. Eddowes, who drove an ambulance in Bristol, about the children in Mrs. Todvold's shelter in Southampton.

Joan Simpson became one of the heroines of Great Britain when in the midst of the Southampton blitzkrieg she ran a quarter of a mile through bombs and blazing buildings to take her baby sister to a place of safety. She then dashed back, bringing help for her mother and father, who were trapped in the debris of their house.

In Bristol Mrs. Eddowes had driven an ambulance through a solid wall of fire into a dead-end street and had rescued several firemen. "I used to make fun of my wife's driving in peacetime," Mr. Eddowes said, "but when the blitz hit us I didn't worry, I knew somehow she would get through." The children in Mrs. Todvold's shelter in Southampton were only fourteen and fifteen years old, but when word came that every able-bodied hand was needed, they had marched out into the battle—one hundred per cent.

During these six months of battle the English had learned that no class and no sex and no city had exclusive possession of any of the qualities which it took to save a nation.

Long hard months were ahead but there was a new kind of confidence now in England. There was hope as well as determination, and as the last days of December came along and the Germans did not fly over in numbers even during the full moon, we began to realize that this phase of the battle for Britain had finished and that this phase had been won by England. There was a lull that most of us thought would last on until the spring, until both sides would strike again with powerful new fleets. There would be a lull through January and February; so Ralph Ingersoll cabled for me to come home for two months, to come to America to do what I could at home to help get aid for the British.

I made my preparations and went for my last walk in London—to the Abbey, to the St. Gaudens statue of Lincoln in Parliament Square, to the statue of Washington in Trafalgar Square, to the grave of Captain John

Smith in St. Sepulchre's church. At the Abbey I saw a New Zealand soldier who made me think of Macaulay's New Zealander surveying the ruins of civilization. I watched him walking about the battered cathedral, and I saw him pick up a piece of glass from one of the windows and ask the verger if he might have it. Assured that he might, the New Zealander said: "Thank you, I will keep it as a souvenir."

I walked in the park, in dark northern shadows, and as the sirens started, I thought of the American aviator in the other war who had written in *War Birds*, his diary: "I haven't lived very well, but I am determined to die well. I don't want to be a hero but I want to die as a man should."

That sort of spirit was living now in London. You felt it.

I had been reading *War Birds* just that afternoon—I happened to see it in an Englishman's library and just happened to pick it up. Who was that American, I wondered, that anonymous American? In that book he had written: "I have spent all my life so far in harsh surroundings, and had so much hard work that I think some good is coming to me, and I have always longed for better things but didn't know how to go about getting them. But now fate has tossed me this opportunity and I must make the best of it. All I have to pay for it is my life. I must make it worth the bargain."

That evening Charles Sweeney came by the Savoy with pilot officer Bill Sharp of the American Eagle Squadron. Charles always looked out for all American pilots on their arrival, and today he had been finding clothes for Bill, for Bill on the way over had been torpedoed on the *Western Prince*. Bill, who came from Santa Maria,

California, had been in the water for six and a half hours. The waves had been about twenty-five feet high, and as they had bobbed in the lifeboat, one person after another had become violently seasick. "It's one of the kicks in the pants which nature gives you," Bill said, "to make you seasick when you're close as we were to drowning." After you had rowed in an open boat for six hours with a group of men, Bill said, you knew about all there was to know about them. Bill thought it was interesting to notice what the men had brought with them into a lifeboat. All of them had their passports. "No amount of danger can make you forget your papers," Bill said, "for what good would it do you to save your life in the world today if you couldn't show any papers?"

The next day—the day before Christmas Eve—I crossed England again on my way back to the place where I had landed in England on that sunny day so long ago in June. England had been green in June, with the gardens full of flowers, and we had had a pleasant journey with plenty of room for everyone in the coaches. On that journey we had been very proper people—we had read newspapers and books and there had been no general conversation; we had been strangers. Now, returning over that same line in December, we talked practically the whole way. There were six people in our compartment—two women, two privates in the army, an officer in the Royal Air Force, and I. The privates had third-class tickets, but they sat with us in our first-class carriage because the train was packed and nobody makes any fuss any more about where anybody sits on trains in England. We were hardly out of London before it began to get dark and the sirens sounded. With that, every light in the train was turned out. Soon we heard

the Germans overhead and the guns began banging, and we slowed down to fifteen miles an hour.

One of the women, sitting in a corner, was the squadron leader's wife, and from her corner of the darkness she said: "What time is it?"

I had a luminous watch and replied: "It's half past five."

"You over in that corner," said the woman, "are you an American?"

I said: "Sure," and she wanted to know if I were a soldier, a diplomat, a newspaperman. Then she volunteered information of her own—she told where she and her husband were going. The soldiers told where they were going and why—they were on leave for the first time in nearly a year and were going home to find out if their girls had forgotten them; a year was very long. The other woman announced herself as a buyer for a store; she had been into London on business. The airman formerly had been in a brokerage house in the city—he was a Canadian, but had been in London since the other war.

The airman asked where I was going, and I said I was on my way to a flying-field to catch a plane for New York. Both of the women said it must be wonderful to be able to fly to New York in the middle of the war. They, however, wouldn't leave England even if they could; England was their home; they wanted to stay there, to go through it.

The airman after a time began to talk about propaganda and the British lack of propaganda sense, of their inability to use it as a fighting weapon of war. He told about preparing a critique on this subject; he intended to send it to his air vice marshal.

"Do you dare send in criticisms to an air vice marshal?" I asked.

"Oh, yes," he replied, "the R.A.F. is a young outfit and we haven't had time to collect a lot of stuffed dodos—anybody can criticize anybody in this outfit."

"What's wrong with the propaganda?" the airman's wife kept asking in a piping voice.

The airman always gave her the same answer to that question: "You wouldn't understand, darling."

All this went on in the dark.

Once the train stopped, and the airman pulled back the curtain to peep out. The guns were banging terrifically and the Germans were dropping white flares all about us.

"Where are we?" asked the airman's wife.

"We're in the worst possible place," the airman answered; "we're standing in a station."

"Well," said the airman's wife, "let's have a cigaret."

We were old friends by the time we came to the end of that journey.

Before day the next morning, the Dutch started flying us to Lisbon—me and Quent Reynolds of *Collier's*, Red Mueller of the International News Service, an air attaché from the American Embassy in London, a courier for the Foreign Office, and a courier from the Swiss Legation in London.

In six hours we were in Portugal—free once again.

It was Christmas Eve and we were in Lisbon. That evening at the bar of the Avenida Palace we drank egg noggs and listened to the Archbishop of York, broadcasting from London: "When we look back over human history, we take no joy in the periods of widespread, uninterrupted comfort. The pleasures of our fathers have

no value for us; but their pains and the fortitude with which they bore them are part of the treasure of the race, and an abiding inspiration. To endure pain, of body or of mind, for a great cause or out of love for men has a nobility far surpassing in value any kind of comfort. . . .”

Two days later we had booked passages home on mattresses on the floor of the lounge of the American Export liner *Exeter*. In another few hours we would have escaped through the neck of the Old World bottle—through Lisbon, the only port in western Europe which the American government allowed United States citizens to use.

The first feeling you had in Lisbon was one of release—not at first from bombs and battles, but from the endless red tape required of a neutral in a country at war. We were bound for home, where we would not have to check in and out with security police each time we moved, where we would not have to fill out blank forms until we were blue in the face.

After I had been six months on a European battlefield, I found as I was leaving for home that my impressions were filled with blurred memories of blazing cities, of planes, of personally having repeated hundreds of times:

“My passport number is 365. It was issued by the high commissioner of the Philippines at Manila, date: February 22, 1940. My police registration is 1010665. I have been vaccinated. My national registration is 7060.”

I kept hearing myself saying over and over: “Here is my permission. Here is my authority.”

Then I would be told: “But your category is only B. You must have category A.”

"What must I do, then, whom must I see, where do I see them?"

"Have you priority?"

"I have priority."

"But for this you must have double priority."

I soon would be bound for home—on mattresses with forty others. But what did I care? I had slept in London in the Abraham Lincoln room of the Savoy Hotel with 171 others. I was not so particular any more about where I slept. I had heard a Queen snoring and I had heard a cabinet minister snort in his sleep. Where I slept was merely relative.

Three nights before this I had crossed England in a train in complete darkness. Every light had been out—even the dim blue ones in the corridors. Enemy planes had been just overhead, dropping flares upon us; we had heard the sound of heavy anti-aircraft fire. Then the next morning we had flown to Lisbon. We had been in England at daybreak, and in the afternoon we had been in Portugal. We had crossed a thousand miles of ocean. Somehow the speed of that transition made me think of Christ saying to the thief on the cross in Jerusalem that in no time they would be in Paradise. Out of war, into peace.

Here in Lisbon we had lights and butter and sugar. And in Lisbon we realized how little such things meant to us. In Lisbon we turned our thoughts back to a country that was fighting in darkness—to a great generation of British people who, like the Lord in *The Green Pastures*, had learned through suffering. They had learned, and I too had learned, by being with them through those months. In the depth of the English blackout I had seen the stars.

A NOTE ON THE TYPE

The text of this book is set in Caledonia, a new Linotype face designed by W. A. Dwiggins. Caledonia belongs to the family of printing types called "modern face" by printers—a term used to mark the change in style of type-letters that occurred about 1800. Caledonia is in the general neighborhood of Scotch Modern in design, but is more freely drawn than that letter.

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